

Relating to animals, plants, and things

ANTH 110 M

Summer session 1, 2018

T/Th 9:00-12:30, Social Science 2 rm 171

Instructor: Jon Nyquist

Office hours: Tuesday 1-3 pm and by appointment, Social Science 1 rm 237

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Course description

What is it like to be a fish? Does a speed bump have agency? Can mosquitoes speak, a forest think, and do plants have feelings? How do landscapes shape and bear traces of history? And what can dog breeds tell us about race, sexuality, and science?

Anthropologist and other social scientists have in the last few decades called for a deeper engagement with non-humans of many kinds. We have seen a turn towards taking *things* seriously, a turn to multispecies ethnography, and increasingly a willingness to question and extend what we mean by ‘the human’.

This course explores anthropological investigations of the relations between people and non-humans, such as animals, plants, and things. We will follow a range of analytical approaches, from symbolic approaches to animals and plants through Marxist-inspired biography-of-things approaches, through to the more recent calls to take non-humans seriously in themselves, and to questions regarding what lies in “the human.” We also aim to stay close to the empirical material, and will look at, touch, and smell rocks, door-hinges, dogs, weeds, forests, insects, and landscapes, and we will discuss what a social study of non-humans and human-non-human relations can and should try to accomplish.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students will have a better understanding of how relationships between humans and non-humans are involved in culture and political life in different ways around the

world. Through studies of humans and their relations to animals, plants, and things, this course will challenge Euro-American ideas about nature and culture.

Students will gain an understanding of certain key themes in anthropology, including symbols, material culture, and practice.

The course will also give students practical experience with ethnographic research and writing, as well as analytical writing. Students will learn how to choose a suitable topic based on themes that emerge from readings, and they will get experience observing social practice with a view to analyzing their observations. The course will also introduce students to recent developments in ethnographic methods that aim to be more attentive to non-humans.

Texts

All texts will be available on Canvas.

Class policies

There is no extra credit available.

I decide whether to accept late assignments case-by-case. Check with me if you need to submit work late.

With the exception of the final paper, written work should be turned in as hard copies in class. If you need to submit by email, check with me first.

All submitted work should have citations and references in an appropriate style (e.g. AAA, Chicago, or APA—consistency matters far more than which style you choose). Papers and reading responses should be **double spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font**.

Academic integrity

Plagiarism is not tolerated. Evidence of plagiarism will result in an immediate failing grade in the course and actions as dictated by university policy regarding academic integrity among undergraduate students.

Work load

The expectation within the University of California system during the standard academic year is that for each credit hour of a course, students spend three hours in preparation during the week (e.g. 15 hours for a 5 credit course). This includes completing the readings and weekly

assignments. Students should expect to spend a term-long total of 35 hours participating in class lectures and discussions, 65 hours completing the readings, and a total of 50 hours writing reading responses and papers.

Accomodations

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accomodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. Contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or email at drc@ucsc.edu for more information.

Safety and Inclusion

The Anthropology Department is committed to fostering safe and equitable learning environments for our students. We believe and support survivors of violence, harassment, and discrimination of any kind. Students, as well as faculty and TAs, are expected to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment, discrimination, and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. Faculty and TAs encourage students to discuss any questions, issues, or concerns regarding safety and inclusion, and we will work to connect you to other resources as needed.

Resources

There are many resources and centers around campus to help you succeed. CAPS (<http://caps.ucsc.edu>) offers a variety of services to help you adjust to college life, including free and confidential counseling. Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy from CARE (<http://care.ucsc.edu>).

Grading and assignments

Participation and attendance (15 %). Students are expected to come to class having done all the assigned readings and assignments and participate actively in class discussion and activities.

Reading responses (25 %). One reading response per week due each Thursday in class (there is no reading response due in week 5, but you have the option of turning in a week 5 response to make up for one missed response paper in an earlier week). Reading responses should:

- Not be summaries—they should engage with the authors' arguments rather than summarize the cases they use to make those arguments.
- Be centered around a connection between two or more readings (a theme, topic, concept, or question).
- Be analytical, not opinion pieces. It's ok to be critical, but it must be grounded in the readings.
- Include one question at the end. This can be either something you were wondering about in the readings, a question that opens for discussion, or a provocation.
- Be about 400-600 words.

Observation assignment (20 %). For this assignment, you are required to go out and observe a site or instance of human-non-human interaction. The way you observe and write about the interaction should be consciously inspired by one or more of the readings. You can for instance take inspiration from what an author is attentive to, from their analytical approach, or from their style of writing. What you turn in should be a "thick" description of the interaction. It should also include one paragraph where you explain how you took inspiration from the readings. 3-4 pages, double spaced (1000-1200 words).

Presentation of observation assignment (10 %). In week 4, each student will do a presentation of their observations. Your presentation should describe the encounter or site you observed and

what you found especially interesting in your observations. Was there anything that surprised you? You should also explain the approach you took, and how you took inspiration from one or more of the readings. The presentation should include some non-talking element (images, a sound clip, a physical object you bring in, etc.). The presentation should be about 10-15 min.

Final analytic paper (30 %) – 5 pages (1400-1600 words).

The prompt for the final analytic paper will be handed out and posted on Canvas at least one week before the due date, July 27.

Lectures and readings

**The schedule may be subject to small changes. In case of changes, these will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Week 1 – Introduction, non-humans are good to think with

Tuesday 6/26 – Introduction, syllabus, etc.

Optional: Sagan, Dorion. “The human is more-than-human” online: <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/228-the-human-is-more-than-human-interspecies-communities-and-the-new-facts-of-life>

Thursday 6/28 – Non-humans as vehicles of (contested) meaning

Smith, Nicholas. “Return of the living dead: Unsettling and the Tasmanian Tiger”

Kalland, Arne. “Whale politics and green legitimacy: A critique of the anti-whaling campaign”

In class film: “Cane toads: the conquest”

Week 2 – The social lives of things

Tuesday 7/3 – Co-constitution of people and things

Kopytoff, Igor. “The Cultural Biographies of Things”

Ssorin-Chaikov, Nikolai: "Bear skins and macaroni: The social life of things at the margins of a Siberian state collective."

Miller, Daniel. *Stuff*. (chapter 1)

Thursday 7/5 – Do things have agency?

Latour, Bruno. “Where are the missing masses?”

Recommended: Stallybrass, “Marx’s coat”

Week 3 – From the non-humans’ point of view

Tuesday 7/10 – Attunement, care, umwelt

Despret, Vinciane. “The Body we Care for: Figures of Anthro-zoo-genesis”

Uexkull, Jacob Von. “A stroll through the worlds of animals and men”

In class film: “Microcosm”

(talk about the observation assignment)

Thursday 7/12 – Seeing like a ...

Bear, Christopher and Sally Eden. “Thinking like a fish”

Hustak, Carla and Natasha Myers, “Involutionary momentum”

****Field activity with Alex Jones, Campus Natural Reserve Manager****

Week 4 – Landscapes and transformations

Tuesday 7/17 – Landscapes

Ingold, Tim. “Temporality of the landscape”

Ogden, Laura. *Swamplife*. (Chapter 4, chapter 3 optional)

Optional: Cosgrove, “Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea”

****Observation exercise due in class + presentations****

Thursday 7/19 – Mimicry, anthropomorphism, transformation

Myers, Natasha. “Conversations on plant sensing”

Willerslev, Rane. “Animism as mimesis” (read at least p. 1-8) and “Animals as Persons” (read whole chapter) from *Soul Hunters*

In-class film: “My life as a turkey”

****Observation exercise presentations****

****Final paper prompt distributed****

Week 5 – Beyond the human?

Tuesday 7/24 – Writing history with non-humans

Mitchell, Timothy. “Can the mosquito speak?”

Crosby, Alfred. “Ecological imperialism”

Optional: White, Richard. *The Organic Machine*. (excerpts)

Thursday 7/26 – class wrap-up

Raffles, Hugh. “Twenty-five years is a long time”

Clark, Nigel. *Inhuman Nature*. (introduction)

Final paper due Friday July 27th at 5pm, email to jnyquist@ucsc.edu