

PH305S/PH405S Justice for Animals

Syllabus for Autumn 2025
Department of Philosophy
University of Aberdeen

Course Coordinator & Lecturer: Dr Eilidh Beaton

Course Description

Animals across the world are subject to countless harms. Factory farming induces pain, suffering, and premature death. Zoos restrict animals' freedom and their ability to engage in meaningful species-specific forms of life. Many wild animals are currently undergoing loss of habitat, and prey animals often experience extreme suffering when they are hunted by other wild animals. Companion animals are not immune from harm either. Many experience neglect – including unintentional neglect from loving owners – or health problems caused by the ways in which they have been bred.

Philosophers have long been interested in questions concerning the nature of our *moral* duties to non-human animals. However, it is only recently that a literature focused on the *political* status of animals has emerged. In this course, we will survey a diverse range of questions in this newer literature concerning animal rights and human obligations. Topics discussed may vary from year to year, but examples of the kinds of questions we might engage with include: What kind of normative framework is most appropriate for understanding questions of justice for animals? Should animals have citizenship rights? If so, which animals should be entitled to such rights? Is painless killing of animals wrongful? What are our obligations to companion animals? Should humans try to mitigate the harm wild animals do to one another? When there is a genuine tension between human and animal interests, how should we proceed?

We will explore these questions by way of engagement with contemporary work in justice for animals, from scholars such as Christine Korsgaard, Will Kymlicka, and Martha Nussbaum. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to think deeply about their own personal, political, and legal relationships with the animals in their lives and the wider environment.

Core Texts

Students are encouraged to purchase copies of the following two texts, from which we will be reading several chapters in this course:

1. Martha Nussbaum, *Justice for Animals* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022).
2. Sue Donaldson & Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Required Readings
Week 1	Justice for Animals and the Scala Naturae	<i>Justice for Animals</i> . Introduction, Chapter 1: Brutality and Neglect: Injustice in Animal Lives, and Chapter 2: The Scala Naturae and the “So Like Us” Approach. Chris Hegedus and D. A. Pennebaker dirs., <i>Unlocking the Cage</i> (HBO Documentary Films, 2016).
Week 2	Liberation and Abolition	<i>Justice for Animals</i> . Chapter 3: The Utilitarians: Pleasure and Pain. Gary Francione, <i>Animals as Persons</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), Introduction, pp. 1-24. Gary Francione, ‘Animals – Property or Persons?’, in <i>Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions</i> ed. by Cass Sunstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), pp. 108-142.
Week 3	Animal Rights and Citizenship Theory	<i>Zoopolis</i> . Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2: Universal Basic Rights for Animals, and Chapter 3: Extending Animal Rights via Citizenship Theory, pp. 1-70.
Week 4	Domesticated Animal Citizens	<i>Zoopolis</i> . Chapter 4: Domesticated Animals Within Animal Rights Theory, up to the end of section 3 only, and all of Chapter 5: Domesticated Animal Citizens (i.e. pp. 73-89 and 101-155).
Week 5	From Kant to Capabilities	<i>Justice for Animals</i> . Chapter 4: Christine Korsgaard’s Kantian Approach, and Chapter 5: The Capabilities Approach: Forms of Life and Respecting the Creatures Who Live With Them. <i>Zoopolis</i> . Chapter 4: Domesticated Animals Within Animal Rights Theory, only section 5 ‘Nussbaum and the Species Norm Principle’, pp. 95-99.
Week 6	READING WEEK	No lectures or tutorials.
Week 7	Justice for Wild Animals	<i>Zoopolis</i> . Chapter 6: Wild Animal Sovereignty. <i>Justice for Animals</i> . Chapter 10: The “Wild” and Human Responsibility. (This chapter is required for both this week & next week, so take your time reading it)

Week 8	Liminal Animal Denizens	<i>Justice for Animals</i> . Chapter 10: The “Wild” and Human Responsibility. (Finish from last week.) <i>Zoopolis</i> . Chapter 7: Liminal Animal Denizens.
Week 9	Sentience	Jonathan Birch, <i>The Edge of Sentience: Risk and Precaution in Humans, Other Animals, and AI</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024). Chapter 2: The Concept of Sentience, Chapter 6: Converging on Precautions (skim pp. 113-123, up to the end of section 6.2, and read pp. 123-137), Chapter 8: Debating Proportionality.
Week 10	“Tragic Conflicts” and the Role of Culture	<i>Justice for Animals</i> . Chapter 7: The Harm of Death, and Chapter 8: Tragic Conflicts and How to Move Beyond Them. Maneesha Deckha, ‘Is Multiculturalism Good For Animals?’, in <i>Animals, Race, and Multiculturalism</i> ed. by Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues and Les Mitchells (Cham: Springer, 2017), 61-94.
Week 11	Violence, Just War, and Animals	Lisa Kemmerer, 'Just War and Warrior Activists', <i>Green Theory & Praxis: The Journal of Ecopedagogy</i> 4:2 (2008), 25-49. Alasdair Cochrane and Steve Cook, “‘Humane Intervention’: the international protection of animal rights”, <i>Journal of Global Ethics</i> 12:1 (2016), 106-121. Josh Milburn and Sara Van Goozen, 'Counting Animals in War: First steps towards an inclusive just war theory', <i>Social Theory and Practice</i> 47:4 (2021), 657-685.

Further Reading

Week 1 - Justice for Animals and the Scala Naturae

- Ed Yong, *An Immense World* (Random House, 2022).
- Steve Cook, 'Animal Rights, Moral Motivation, and the Experience of Wonder', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2025), online first.
- Steven Wise, *Rattling the Cage: Towards Legal Rights for Animals* (Boston MA: Da Capo Press, 2000).
- Thomas White, *In Defence of Dolphins: The New Moral Frontier* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2007).

Week 2 - Liberation and Abolition

Utilitarianism

- Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (any version, available online on Early Modern Texts). See especially chapters 1, 3, and 4.
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (any version). See especially Chapter 2 ‘What Utilitarianism Is’.
- John Stuart Mill, ‘Whewell on Moral Philosophy’ (1852), in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Volume X – Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society ed. by John M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969). The relevant excerpt has been uploaded as a word doc and is available on the course page.
- Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation Now* (Vintage Digital, 2023). See especially Chapter 1 ‘All Animals Are Equal...’.
- Peter Singer, ‘Animal Suffering is a Human Responsibility | Full Interview’, Big Think Youtube Channel. Available [here](#).
- Alasdair Cochrane, *An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Chapter 3, Utilitarianism and Animals.

Abolitionism

- Josephine Donovan and Carol Adams, *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1996).
- William A. Edmundson, ‘Do Animals Need Rights?’, *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 23:3 (2015), 345-360.
- Richard A. Epstein, ‘Animals as Objects, or Subjects, of Rights’, in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions* ed. by Cass Sunstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), pp. 143-161.
- Gary Francione, *Animals, Property, and the Law* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).
- Gary Francione, *Animals as Persons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), whole book.
- Gary Francione, ‘The Philosophy of Animal Rights’, 2019 Plenary Session, European Federation of Animal Science Youtube Channel. Available [here](#).
- Robert Garner, ‘Animal Welfare: A Political Defence’, *Journal of Animal Law and Ethics* 1, pp. 161-174.
- Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
- Cass Sunstein, ‘Slaughterhouse Jive’, *The New Republic* 29 Jan 2001. Available [here](#).

Week 3 - Animal Rights and Citizenship Theory

- Sue Donaldson & Will Kymlicka, ‘Locating Animals in Political Philosophy’, *Philosophy Compass* 11:11 (2016), 692-701.
- Robert Garner and Siobhan O’Sullivan (eds), *The Political Turn in Animal Ethics* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Press, 2016). See especially chapters 1, 3, 7, and 9.

Week 4 – Domesticated Animal Citizens

- Christopher Hinchcliffe, ‘Animals and the Limits of Citizenship: Zoopolis and the Concept of Citizenship’, *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 23:3 (2015), pp. 302-320.
- Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, ‘Interspecies Politics: Reply to Hinchcliffe and Ladwig’, *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 23:3 (2015), up to the end of section 2, pp. 321-335 only.
- Angie Pepper, ‘Political Agency in Humans and Other Animals’, *Contemporary Political Theory* 20:2 (2020), pp. 296-317.

- Robert Garner and Siobhan O’Sullivan (eds), *The Political Turn in Animal Ethics* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Press, 2016). See especially chapter 5.
- Brian Berkey, 'Prospects for an Inclusive Theory of Justice: The Case of Non-Human Animals', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 34:5 (2017), pp. 679-695.

Week 5 – From Kant to Capabilities

- Christine Korsgaard, 'Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals', in *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* vols 25/26 ed. by Grethe B. Peterson (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004).
- Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to Other Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
- Robert Garner, *A Theory of Justice for Animals: Animal Rights in a Nonideal World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Chapter 7, 'Three Positions Rejected'.

Week 7 – Justice for Wild Animals

- Jeff McMahan, 'The Meat Eaters', in *The New York Times* 19-September-2010. Available [here](#).
- Clare Palmer, 'What (If Anything) Do We Owe to Wild Animals?', *Between the Species* 16:1 (2013), pp. 15-38.
- Kyle Johannsen, *Wild Animal Ethics: The Moral and Political Problems of Wild Animal Suffering* (New York: Routledge, 2020).
- Ben Bramble, 'Painlessly Killing Predators', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 38:2 (2021), pp. 217-225.
- Heather Browning and Walter Veit, 'Positive Wild Animal Welfare', *Biology and Philosophy* 38:14 (2023), pp. 1-19.
- Kok-Chor Tan, 'Just Conservation: The question of justice in global wildlife conservation', *Philosophy Compass* 16:2 (2021), pp. 1-12.

Week 8 – Liminal Animal Denizens

- Andree-Anne Cormier and Mauro Rossi, 'The Problem of Predation in Zoopolis', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 35:4 (2018), Part 3, 'The Problem of Predation With Respect to Liminal Animals'.
- Tora Holmberg, *Urban Animals: Crowding in Zoocities* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015).
- See also recommended readings from last week

Week 9 – Sentience

- Martha Nussbaum, *Justice for Animals*, Chapter 6, 'Sentience and Striving: A Working Boundary', pp. 118-153.
- Jonathan Birch, 'Précis on The Edge of Sentience: Risk and Precaution in Humans, Other Animals, and AI', in *Animal Sentience: An Interdisciplinary Journal on Animal Feeling* 527 (2025). Available [here](#).
- Jonathan Birch, *The Edge of Sentience: Risk and Precaution in Humans, Other Animals, and AI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), especially Chapter 1 'A Walk Along the Edge' and Chapter 7 'Involving the Public'.
- Joshua Milburn, *Food, Justice, and Animals: Feeding the World Respectfully* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), Chapter 2, 'Bugs and Bivalves'.

Week 10 – “Tragic Conflicts” and the Role of Culture

- Paula Casal, 'Is Multiculturalism Bad For Animals?', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 11:1, (2003), pp. 1-22.
- Luís Cordeiro-Rodrigues and Les Mitchell eds., *Animals, Race, and Multiculturalism* (Cham: Springer, 2017).
- Maneesha Deckha, 'Animal Justice, Cultural Justice: A Posthumanist Response to Cultural Rights in Animals', *Journal of Animal Law and Ethics* 2 (2007), pp. 189-230.
- Maneesha Deckha, 'Toward a Postcolonial, Posthumanist Feminist Theory: Centralizing Race and Culture in Feminist Work on Nonhuman Animals', *Hypatia* 27:3 (2012), pp. 527-545.
- Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad For Women?* ed. by Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard, and Martha Nussbaum (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- Amy Linch and Breena Holland, 'Cultural Killing and the Human-Animal Capability Conflict', *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 18:3 (2017), pp. 322-336.

Week 11 – Violence, Just War, and Animals

- Josh Milburn and Sara Van Goozen, 'Animals and the Ethics of War: a call for an inclusive just-war theory', *International Relations* 37:3 (2023), 423-448.
- Ivar Hardman (pseudonym), 'In Defence of Direct Action', *Journal of Controversial Ideas* 1:1 (2021).