

Seeing/Observing Animals Across the Disciplines

BIO 301 History of Biological Thought | Professor Brown

Here I sketch my plans for an advanced course, emphasizing the parts that will be based on consideration of animals. I pointed particularly to the section on the history of animal ecology, followed by a final course case study on brucellosis/wildlife management. Students will contribute to that module by doing primary research on the history of this question from multidisciplinary angles (e.g. disease ecology, wildlife management, policy, etc.).

Bio 301 -- History of Biological Thought – Spring 2012

Course description: This seminar course will consider how fundamental biological theories emerge and change in a complex environment of empirical knowledge and social/political concerns. We will examine conceptual changes in an array of subdisciplines by reading a contemporary history of each, along with excerpts from primary and secondary texts. Areas of study will include reproductive biology, evolution and genetics, and medicine. Readings will consider the interactions of biological theory with discussions of race, ethics and feminist theory.

Goals: Students should gain the ability to consider the development of a theories and ideas in biology, while putting this development in its social context.

Overview of the 2013 version of the course:

- Introductory section on modes of historical enquiry in science (Bowler reader) and other readings on Aristotle, Renaissance, Scientific revolution (Bacon).
- Ovary of Eve --- history of reproductive theories -- much on animals there
- Darwin, Huxley and Haeckel – evolutionary views of human-animal distinction
- Visualization in biology – some animal topics from tutorial on anatomy and natural history illustration and topics in medicine (x-rays and imaging).
- History of animal ecology
 - Start with readings on human animal relationships – importance of animals (perhaps Paul Shepard's *The Others: How animals make us human.*)
 - Animal ecology as a discipline – Charles Elton and Aldo Leopold
 - Disease ecology case -- bison/brucellosis/wildlife management

Assessment – weekly response papers through; may rethink major research project in favor of two smaller research projects: (1) analysis of imagery in textbooks over time (oral presentations); (2) Position paper on bison/brucellosis case.

Suggestions from others:

Ann Blum – picturing nature

Eyewitness observation

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Thoreau's notebooks and journals – observing nature
Chief Powhatten – observing passenger pigeons

Inattention blindness – youtube clips