

GEOG 2156B: Animal Geographies

Course Outline – Section 001 – Winter 2021



Although this academic year is different, Western University is committed to a thriving campus. We encourage you to check out the [Digital Student Experience](#) website to manage your academics and well-being. Additionally, the following link provides available resources to support students on and off campus: www.uwo.ca/health/.

1. Technical Requirements



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer

If you wish to come to the optional office hours or arrange an appointment, you will also need:



Working microphone



Working webcam



Zoom application installed

Recommended technical specifications: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/timetables.html>

Western Zoom webpage, including privacy information: <https://wts.uwo.ca/zoom/index.html>

2. Course Information

Delivery Mode	Time
Online-remote	Asynchronous – lecture material will be posted to OWL every Tues and Thurs

*Details about design and delivery of the course are listed below in Section 5

Classes Start	Reading Week	Classes End	Study Day	Exam Period
January 11	February 13-21	April 12	April 13	April 14 - 30

* March 15, 2021: Last day to drop a first-term half course or a first-term full course without penalty

Course Instructor	Contact Information	Optional Zoom Drop-in / Office hours
Dr. Tony Weis	tony.weis@uwo.ca	every second Friday (end unit) – time TBD additional meeting available by appointment

Group	Teaching Assistants	Contact Information	Office hours
1	Rebecca Ellis	rellis23@uwo.ca	By appointment
2	Mikaela Gilhooly	mgilhool@uwo.ca	By appointment
3	Aranya Iyer	aiyer25@uwo.ca	By appointment

Dr. Weis will be available for an optional group session on Zoom at the conclusion of each unit.

Please feel encouraged to submit general queries about course content or logistics through the OWL Forums tab, which will get checked and answered regularly, and sorted into thematic folders as the term proceeds.

Groups will be specified with an announcement on OWL, and you can email your TA with queries or to set up an online appointment using Zoom.

3. Calendar Description

Investigates the fast-changing geographies of animals in relation to global environmental change. The initial focus is on extinctions, endangerment, and broad population declines occurring among many wild animal species. The subsequent focus is on the soaring populations and conditions of life for a few species of domesticated animals.

2 lecture hours, 0.5 credit. No prerequisites.

4. Overview

This course examines the fast-changing geographies of both wild and domesticated animals. The basic context for this is the crashing populations of many wild animal species on one hand, and the soaring populations of a small number of species that are mass produced on the other. Most attention is given to mammals, followed by birds, with occasional references to amphibians and fishes. A core premise of the course is that human-animal *interspecies relations* are a central and often underappreciated aspect of environmental change, and essential to understanding contemporary conservation challenges and prospects for a more humane and sustainable world. Related to this, the course will repeatedly pose questions about the differential spheres of moral concern associated with these relations. It will also consider some key ways that changing interspecies relations have affected zoonotic disease risks over time.

The first half of the course focuses on the positions of animals within shrinking and modified habitats. This section pivots on an overview of contemporary patterns of endangerment and extinction risk, and the rapid population losses occurring among many non-threatened species and non-domesticated vertebrates as a whole – a process that some conservation scientists have described as ‘de-faunation’. Endangerment and extinctions are then examined in relation to major threats facing parks and protected areas, the ‘flagship’ of modern conservation, in particular efforts to contain poaching and growing black markets in endangered live animals and body parts. This is followed with a discussion of the evolution of (some) zoos, and debates about the roles that zoos and other small enclosures might play in conservation. The first section culminates with an introduction to big visions of re-wilding.

In the second half of the course attention turns to how animals are variously used or embraced in human societies, from the long history of domestication to contemporary dynamics of industrial production and relations within our homes. This section begins with the crucial role of animal domestication and labour in human societies for most of the history of civilization and agriculture. Another foundation is a review of the role of animals as both important commodities to be harvested on colonial frontiers and key sources of labour in remaking colonial landscapes. Attention then shifts to the vast and growing populations of a few species that are raised for human consumption, the dramatically changing conditions of life these animals face, and the land and resources this entails. This is followed by an assessment of the place of animals in other aspects of production, and associated ethical debates, before turning to the handful of companion species which inhabit intimate positions in human households.

5. Readings and Documentary Films

There is no required textbook. Readings for each unit are available for free on OWL in the unit folders in the Resources tab.

In addition to the readings, you are also expected to watch 1 documentary film per unit (and in 1 case, 2 short ones). Some are available for free on YouTube or Vimeo. Some you will need to pay a small rental fee through iTunes, Amazon, GooglePlay, or Vimeo. The list of documentary films and details on how to access them can be found in a file on the Resources tab.

Along with the lecture segments (MP4 format), the accompanying PowerPoint slides will subsequently be posted as PDF files. The PDF files contain an abundance of additional links to short videos, valuable websites, reports, and news items. In including so many additional active links, I do not expect you to follow everything – my only hope is that they might provide a starting point that allow you to dig into subjects you are most interested in a bit further.

6. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will:

- be able to understand and explain how human relations with other species relate to major dynamics of environmental change;
- be capable of critically engaging with debates, conflicts, and policy issues surrounding biodiversity conservation and the use of animals in human societies;
- have a conceptual basis for further studies in conservation, agriculture and food, and critical animal studies;
- be inspired to think about questions surrounding environmentalism, trajectories of animal life, and interspecies responsibilities, and how these relate to one another.

7. Course Format

This course is based upon online lectures, readings, and documentary films. The content is organized into 6 units, as outlined in the following section. Lecture material is asynchronous, with online lectures uploaded twice-weekly in short segments in folders in the Resources tab in OWL. There will be a total of ~2 lecture hours per week, and the combination of the readings and the documentary films for each of the 6 units should take about 2-3 hours per week. The key is to balance your time in a way that allows you to keep up with lectures, readings, and documentaries on a unit-by-unit basis.

You are expected to complete 5 short unit-based written assignments over the course of the term, which are due on each Thursday at 11.55 pm EST after the completion of the unit (due dates in the schedule).

[Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#). Using the right browser is important, especially when using different features integrated with OWL. If you need technical assistance, support can be found on the [OWL Help page](#) or by contacting the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#) (which can also be reached by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800).

8. Course Objectives and Schedule

This course is focused around six 2-week units on major subjects.

Date	UNIT
Jan. 12	Introduction: the big picture of global agriculture and food
Jan 12 – 17	The 6 th extinction spasm and defaunation
Jan 18 – 24	some key subjects: extinctions in evolutionary history; the current trajectory of losses; population declines beyond extinction
Jan 25 – 31	Conservation I: The primacy (and insufficiency) of parks
Feb 1 – 7	some key subjects: the origins of parks; contemporary pressures; the fast-rising scale of poaching and trade; the increasing militarization of conservation
Feb 8 – 14	Conservation II: Other responses for animals on the brink, from small to big primary focus: the contradictions of zoos – anachronism or conservation necessity?
Feb 15 – 21	Reading week
Feb 22 – 28	primary focus: re-wilding – expanding the scale of conservation
Mar 1 – 7	The importance of domesticated animals in human civilization and European colonialism
Mar 8 – 14	some key subjects: the uneven geography of domestication; animals in the rise of agriculture; the importance of animals on/as resource frontiers in European expansion
Mar 15 – 21	The expanding commodification of animal life I: agriculture
Mar 22 – 28	primary focus: the industrialization of livestock on a world scale
Mar 29 – Apr 4	The expanding commodification of animal life II: other forms of production
Apr 5 – 11	some key subjects: the intensification of fur, animal experimentation, animals in entertainment, the pet industry

9. Communication

- you are encouraged to check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours
- a weekly update will be provided on OWL announcements, and there may be additional announcements from time to time
- you are encouraged to post general course-related queries about both logistics and content (giving them a clear heading) in the Forums tab on OWL
- questions posted on Forums and emails will be monitored daily, and you can expect to receive a response in 24 – 48 hours
- any communication will arrive through your university email account. It is your responsibility to ensure that email received from the University at your UWO address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

10. Evaluation

The evaluation breakdown for the course is as follows:

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Due Date
Unit summaries & reflections	Word document • submit as .doc through OWL Assignment tab in specified folder	20% each x 5	Thursdays at 11.55 pm EST following each unit (see pg. 6 for dates)

Unit summaries & reflections (5 x 20% = 100% of course grade)

For **5 of the 6 units**, you are expected to prepare a short, **1000-word** paper that:

- 1) summarizes and explains the significance of **3** major subjects in the unit, drawing on material from the course lectures, readings, and the documentary film(s) (~**750 words**)
- 2) reflects on how **1** or more of these subjects challenge you to think about interspecies relations and/or environmental problems in ways you did not previously consider, or in relation to your own life (this could range from a single experience to your everyday habits and surroundings) (~**250 words**)

There is no blueprint for these papers. You do not need to worry about whether you have identified *the* 3 major subjects – in every unit, there are many more than 3 subjects you could conceivably choose to focus on.

Consider the unit as a whole, including lectures, readings, and the documentary film, and then identify 3 subjects to discuss clearly and succinctly. These might be chosen based on: what you see as being most significant; what you find most interesting; what you feel most confident discussing; subjects you think can most easily be discussed together; and subject(s) you would most like to reflect on in the second part of the paper.

** You **can** choose to submit a paper for 5 and take 1 unit off, or submit 6 and drop your lowest mark **

Format: use 12 pt. font, double space, and save and submit your work as a Word document. You can follow whatever formatting convention you are comfortable with (just be sure to follow it correctly and consistently)

Length: 1000 words max. (about 4 double-spaced pages), not including references.

Save as: LASTNAME-FIRSTNAME-UNIT#.doc

Submit: on OWL via Turnitin (see statement in policies below)

Due: Thursdays at 11.55 pm EST, in the week following the conclusion of the unit.

UNIT 1: January 28

UNIT 2: February 11

UNIT 3: March 4

UNIT 4: March 18

UNIT 5: April 1

UNIT 6: in exam period TBD (when registrar determines exam date)

Grading:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

In general, top grades (**A / A+**) will be given to papers that demonstrate a very strong grasp of the subjects, incorporate some material from the readings and documentaries effectively, contain a thoughtful reflection, and are very well-written and edited. For top marks it is important to be specific and avoid ambiguities and grammatical problems.

Lower grades (**C and below**) will be given to papers where major subjects are conveyed inaccurately, unclearly, or indicate serious confusion, fail to draw upon the readings at all, and have sloppy writing. It is usually quite apparent if something has been prepared in great haste and without seriously engaging with the material.

Notes:

- plagiarized or copied work will receive a grade of **zero** (see notes on academic offences below).
- after an assessment is returned, if you have concerns you should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting your TA. To ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days.
- click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning grading.

Late policy

- late papers without illness self-reports subject to a penalty of 10%/day
- late papers with self-reported absence or other documented accommodation should be submitted within 24 hours after the end of the period covered by either accommodation

Grades will not be adjusted on the basis of need. It is important to monitor your performance in the course. Remember: You are responsible for your grades in this course.

11. Online Participation and Engagement

- students can attend synchronous live sessions at the end of each unit
- students can post questions and thoughts in the Forums tab in OWL, and the instructor will try to respond within 24 – 48 hours

12. Professionalism, Privacy, and Online Etiquette

Western students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct. Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course:

- students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL
- all course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- be courteous toward the instructor and your peers in optional synchronous sessions
- be professional and scholarly in all online postings in Forums: the exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.

13. Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student’s final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

For the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

14. How to be successful in this class

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.

- 1) Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
- 2) Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
- 3) Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Treat this course as you would a face-to-face course. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively than just reading or watching the videos.
- 4) Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the discussion boards in the Forums tab and post questions there.
- 5) Attend the optional end-of-unit synchronous session.
- 6) Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.

15. Statements Concerning Online Etiquette

While much of this course is conducted asynchronously, there are some components that involve online interactions, namely optional synchronous meetings at the conclusion of each unit, and posts to Forums.

To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please honour the following 'netiquette' considerations:

- keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. "Flaming" is never appropriate.
- be professional and scholarly in all online postings.

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online element of classes is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

16. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

17. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography strives at all times to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website.

More information about "Accessibility at Western" is available.

18. Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit Western's Health and Wellness website for more information on mental health resources.

19. Support Services

Western's Support Services
Student Development Centre

20. Important Dates

January 11: Classes resume

January 19: Last day to add a second term half course

February 15: Family Day – Department Office Closed

February 13 to February 21: Spring Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

March 15: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

April 2: Good Friday

April 12: Classes end

April 13: Study day

April 14 to April 30: Examination Period