

GEOG 2156B: Animal Geographies

Course Outline – Winter 2024



1. Course Information

	Delivery Mode	Day/Time
Lecture	In-person	Mondays 12.30-2.30
Lecture	In-person	Wednesdays 12.30-1.30

Course Instructor	Contact Information	Office hours
Dr. Tony Weis	tony.weis@uwo.ca	Weds. 2.30-3.30 pm, SSC 1403
Teaching Assistant		
Angelica Ramoutar	aramout2@uwo.ca	

Classes Start	Reading Week	Classes End	Study days	Exam Period
January 8	Feb. 19–23	April 8	April 9–10	April 11–30

January 16, 2024: Last day to add a second-term half course

February 19, 2024: Family Day

March 7, 2024: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

2. 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.

3 lecture hours, 0.5 credit. No prerequisites.

3. 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.

You are also expected to watch a number of documentary films and short videos. Most are available for free, but for a few you will need to pay a small rental fee through iTunes, Amazon, GooglePlay, or Vimeo. The documentary films are listed in a file posted in the Resources tab in OWL.

In addition to the readings, films, and short videos, the PowerPoint slides provide an abundance of links to encourage you to dig deeper into subjects you are most interested in.

4. Format

The course outline is indicated below in *Units and Schedule*. There are 3 scheduled lecture hours per week, although the 2-hour session will rarely run the full 2-hours. PowerPoint slides will be posted to OWL as pdfs. The readings for each unit are available on OWL, and you should budget roughly 2-3 hours per week to complete the readings and watch the documentary films and short videos.

You are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned readings and documentary films, and it is important to keep up with this material on a unit-by-unit basis. The evaluation is based on 2 midterm tests, 9 on-line quizzes, and a final exam (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).

5. 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, with significant attention to those being intensively produced. Most attention is given to mammals, followed by birds. A core premise of the course is that the *interspecies relations* between humans and animals are a central and often underappreciated aspect of global environmental change, and that this is essential to understanding contemporary conservation challenges and prospects for a more humane and sustainable world.

The first five segments of the course focus on the positions of animals within rapidly shrinking and modified habitats, and the increasingly desperate contexts of conservation facing a growing array of animal species, with a particular focus on large mammals. This begins with a brief overview of animal extinctions over long periods of time, before diving in more detail into 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. Contemporary endangerment and extinction risks are first examined focusing on

mammals, and next turning to birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians. These discussions draw upon many examples and consider the overarching problems of habitat loss and climate change, the increasing centrality of parks and protected areas to conservation, and the momentous challenges posed by poaching and growing black market trade. After this context is established, we then consider debates about the role that zoos and wildlife sanctuaries play in relation to contemporary conservation challenges, and the major issues associated with re-wilding.

The second half of the course focuses on the small array of animal species whose populations are growing and which occupy a large and growing amount of land. This starts with an overview of the long history of animal domestication and the crucial role that animal labour has played in human societies for most of the history of civilization and agriculture, before considering the importance of animals in European imperialism, both as harvested commodities and as indispensable sources of labour mobilized in the remaking of landscapes and the extraction of various resources. From this point on, the focus shifts to the contemporary conditions of animals in production starting with the industrialization of livestock, which comprises a large and growing share of all mammalian and bird biomass on earth today. This discussion focuses heavily on the conditions of life for animals in industrial production, before looking at how this trajectory is amplifying zoonotic disease risks. Attention then turns to other ways that animals are being intensively produced and used, considering fur, vivisection, and aquaculture. The course concludes with an overview of important moral and environmental issues associated with rising pet populations, and a brief review of some recent developments in the field of ethology – both of which are positioned in relation to the interspecies relations examined in the preceding units.

6. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should:

- 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. Units and Schedule

Unit	Dates	
	Jan. 8	Course introduction
1	Jan. 10	Animal extinctions from the Pleistocene to the 6 th extinction spasm
2	Jan. 15	Animals in the biodiversity crisis I: mammals
	Jan. 17	
	Jan. 19	QUIZ – Units 1-2 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
3	Jan. 22	Animals in the biodiversity crisis II: birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians
	Jan. 24	
	Jan. 26	QUIZ – Unit 3 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
4	Jan. 29	Zoos & wildlife sanctuaries
	Jan. 31	
	Feb. 2	QUIZ – Unit 4 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
	Feb. 5	Re-wilding (intro)
	Feb. 7	TEST #1 (20%)
5	Feb. 12	Re-wilding (continued)
	Feb. 14	
	Feb. 16	QUIZ – Unit 5 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
	Feb. 19-23	Reading Week
6	Feb. 26	Animal domestication in human civilization
	Feb. 28	
	Mar. 1	QUIZ – Unit 6 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
7	Mar. 4	Animals on/as European settler colonial frontiers
	Mar. 6	
	Mar. 8	QUIZ – Unit 7 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
8	Mar. 11	The intensification of livestock production
	Mar. 13	
	Mar. 15	QUIZ – Unit 8 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
8b	Mar. 18	Zoonotic disease risks
	Mar. 20	TEST #2 (20%)
9	Mar. 25	The intensification of other animal production
	Mar. 27	
	Mar. 29	QUIZ – Unit 9 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
10	Apr. 1	Companions: animals in our homes and families
	Apr. 3	
	Apr. 5	QUIZ – Unit 10 (available: 9 am – 11.55 pm)
11	Apr. 8	Major currents in ethology & moral responsibilities to animals
	Apr. 9-10	Study days
	Apr. 11-30	FINAL EXAM (40%) in examination period – date TBD

January 16, 2024: Last day to add a 2nd-term half course

8. Communication

- if you have questions you wish to discuss beyond the class, Dr. Weis is typically available during office hours every after every Monday class and during office hours Wednesday, or by appointment
- you are encouraged to check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours and to read each announcement carefully
- you are encouraged to post general course-related queries (whether content or logistics) to the Forums tab in OWL, which will ensure that the clarifications can be seen by everyone (posts will get monitored regularly and you can expect to receive a response in 24 – 48 hours)
- course announcement will arrive through your university email account in addition to appearing in the Announcement tab on OWL. 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](#).

9. Evaluation

The evaluation breakdown for the course is as follows:

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Dates
Term tests (2)	short answer responses	40% (20% each x 2)	Feb. 7 & Mar. 20
Online quizzes (9 quizzes; top 8 count)	multiple choice quizzes found in Tests & Quizzes tab in OWL	20% (2.5% each x 8)	January 19, 26 February 2, 16 March 8, 15, 29 April 5
Final exam	Short answer + paragraph responses	40%	TBA in exam period: April 11-30

Term tests (2 x 20% = 40% of course grade) and Final exam (40% of course grade)

The 2 term tests are based on short answer questions and the final exam combines short answer questions and questions that involve paragraph responses. In both, students are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned readings. More detailed instructions will be given in advance of both the tests and the final exam.

If you fail to write the term tests or the final exam on the scheduled time you will be given zero, unless you communicate with Dr. Weis *prior to* the exam. Exam absences require a note from your physician (see note on special examination policy below).

Quizzes (8 x 2.5% = 20% of course grade)

On most Fridays (see schedule on pg. 4) you are expected complete a short quiz that will be available on OWL in the Tests & Quizzes tab that will be available between 9 am and 11.55 pm. These quizzes will review material covered in the preceding unit, and some of these will cover documentary films and short videos as indicated in class. There will be 9 quizzes, and your top 8 marks will count.

No accommodations are provided for missed quizzes since the lowest score will be dropped. Quiz answers will not be posted, and if you have questions you can speak to Dr. Weis after class or during office hours.

Notes on grading

- after a test 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 examinations and grading. The following table outlines the University-wide grade descriptors:

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

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.

10. Use of Electronic Devices

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

11. 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

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Medical Illness - Undergraduate Students](#)

[Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#)

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](#).

12. Make-up midterm tests and final exam

Makeups will be granted with approved documentation only. All documentation for missed exams must be provided to the Academic Counselling Office within 48 hours of the scheduled exam, otherwise the instructor will assign a grade of zero.

The format and content of make-ups may differ substantially from the scheduled test or examination.

13. 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](#).

14. Continuity of Education Plan (in-person class pivoting to online learning)

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the university to direct courses move away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

15. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography and Environment 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.

16. 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.

17. Support Services

Western's Support Services
Student Development Centre

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

18. Important Dates

Monday, January 8: Classes resume

Tuesday, January 16: Last day to add a second term half course

Monday, February 19: Family Day – Department Office Closed

February 19 to February 25: Spring Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

Tuesday, March 7: Last day to drop a second term half course without penalty

Friday, March 29: Good Friday – Department Office Closed

Monday, April 8: Classes end

April 9-10: Study days

April 11-30: Examination period