ANIMALS & EMPIRES

Instructor: Arianne Urus (arianne.urus@nyu.edu)
Office Hours: TBD, KJCC Room 527

Course Description

When thinking about history, do animals matter? In this course we will explore the complex relationship between people and animals in world history by asking how animals made empires and empires made animals. People across time have conquered and exploited other people as powerful rulers built far-reaching empires. Around the world people lived amongst animals, and we will examine how relationships between humans and animals were transformed by colonial encounters. With colonial contact came new ways of managing, working with, commodifying, and imagining animals. Looking at European imperialism in the Americas, the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, Japanese and Chinese imperial expansion in Asia, and more, we will consider how colonizing and colonized people alike used animals in different ways to entrench or resist imperial power. But animals were more than just tools people used at war. We will explore the ways animals enabled or thwarted colonial expansion in their own right, as integral figures in regional ecologies, as a way of considering broader questions of animal agency.

Understanding animals and empires enables us to think about history in a way that crosses cultural and national boundaries. Each session will be organized around a theme, with readings that treat various kinds of animals in different empires at different times that will allow us to think about the week’s theme from multiple approaches. We will supplement these works by historians by examining primary sources in class that will help us better understand what animals meant in the lived experience of empire.

Required Reading
All reading materials will be posted to NYU Classes at the beginning of the term. Please read the texts assigned for each meeting, and bring a copy to class with you.

Presence
You are expected to attend every recitation and be fully present in our collective space. This means no laptops or other electronic devices may be used, and cellphones must be on silent and in your bags. This also means that you must participate meaningfully in discussion to earn full credit.

Grading
In-Class Responses: 15%
Attendance and Participation: 20%
Mid-term Assignment: 25%
Final Paper: 30%

Assignments
In-Class Responses
Beginning with session 2, we will set aside approximately 10 minutes at the beginning of each class for short written responses to the assigned readings based on a prompt provided by the instructor. These responses are aimed at helping you write more clearly and better distill the main ideas and arguments, with an eye towards your other written work for this course. In-class responses will be graded on a check/check-plus/check-minus basis, and you may drop the lowest grade.

Mid-term Assignment
Your midterm assignment will be a 3-5 page response to any session’s theme during the first half of the course. In addition to responding to the assigned texts, you will choose an additional academic article or selection from a larger work (subject to my approval) to deepen your understanding of your selected theme. The mid-term assignment is due at the beginning of session 6.

Final Paper
At the end of the course you will write a 5-7 page paper where you pick one imperial encounter we’ve studied to explore in further depth through the analysis of 2-3 primary sources you will select in consultation with me. The final paper is due at the beginning of our last session.

Academic Integrity
If you are found to have plagiarized any part of a paper, or cheated on an exam, you will be reported to the appropriate dean for disciplinary action, and you will receive a failing grade for the course. The NYU College of Arts and Sciences Statement of Academic Integrity is accessible here: http://map.cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity.

Student Resources
As students in the course, you have multiple options for writing assistance. I am available to discuss ideas, help develop a thesis, or aid you as you plan an outline. You may also opt for writing assistance at the Writing Center, the College Learning Center, or the Academic Resource Center. Students needing special accommodations may also seek assistance at the Moses Center.

NYU’s Writing Center http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html
The College Learning Center http://learning.cas.nyu.edu/page/About
Academic Resource Center http://www.nyu.edu/arc
Moses Center for Students with Disabilities http://www.nyu.edu/csd
Colony Conquests

Session 1: Animals as Agents of Conquest


Session 2: New Animals, New Ecologies


Nomadism & Settlement

Session 3: Nomads and Animals


Session 4: The Consequences of Settlement

- Robert Marks, *Tigers, Rice, Silk, and Silt*, Chapter 10, (“‘People said that extinction was not possible’: The Ecological Consequences of Land Clearance”)

Resisting Empire

Session 5: Animals Strike Back


Session 6: People Use Animals to Strike Back

- Peka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, Chapter 4 (“The Empire of the Plains”).
Animals & Empires, 4


**Economies and Labor**

**Session 7: Feeding an Empire with Hunting and Fishing**

**Session 8: Animal Workers**
- Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt*, Chapter 3 (“In-Between”).

**Animal Symbolism**

**Session 9: Collecting and the Exotic**

**Session 10: Animal Epithets in Colonial and Nationalist Discourse**
- Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts*, Chapter 3 (“Fabulous Animals’: Showing People”).

**Animals in Global Capitalism**

**Session 11: Animal Commodities**
- Sam White, “From Globalized Pig Breeds to Capitalist Pigs: A Study in Animal Cultures and Evolutionary History,” in *Environmental History* 16 (January 2011): 94-120.
- Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt*, chapter 6
**Session 12: Industrialized Animals**