

**PHI 274**  
**Ethics and Animals**

**Professor Kelly Oliver**

**Course Description:**

This course will begin with an overview of some of the most important philosophical arguments about animals in the history of philosophy and in the contemporary animal rights movement, including texts by Peter Singer and Tom Regan. The central focus of the course, however, will be the ways in which considerations of animals in Continental Philosophy challenges the very notion of rights, both animal rights and human rights. By tracing the status of animals in Continental Philosophy, we will see how bringing animals into discussions of what it means to be human not only challenges the centrality of rights discourse but also suggests that ethics requires moving beyond any subject-centered notions of rights to a broader conception of the relation between individuals and their obligations to others. To this end, we will read texts by Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben.

**Required Reading:**

Animal Rights, eds. Andrew Linzey and Paul Barry Clarke (this volume has brief excerpts from philosophers starting with the Ancient Greeks up to contemporary animal rights arguments from Singer, Regan and Midgely).

The Four Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, Martin Heidegger (selections)

The Nature Lectures, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (selections)

The Open: Man and Animal, Giorgio Agamben

The Animal that I am, Jacques Derrida

Reading Packet, which includes selections by Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Lacan.

**Optional Reading:**

Animal Pedagogy and the Science of Kinship, Kelly Oliver

**Method of Evaluation:**

Two take-home essay exams (5 pages each).

One final paper (an essay of 5-10 pages).

Class participation.

Students will present their ideas for their final papers in the last week of class.

Graduate Students will write a final paper of 20-30 pages and have individual meetings outside of class.

## **Schedule**

Week One: Animal Rights, Parts I & II

Week Two: Animal Rights, Parts II & III

Week Three: Heidegger, The Four Fundamental Concepts

Week Four: Heidegger, The Four Fundamental Concepts

Week Five: Merleau-Ponty, The Nature Lectures

Week Six: Merleau-Ponty, The Nature Lectures

Week Seven: Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject” & “The Mirror Stage”

Week Eight: Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject” & “The Mirror Stage”

Week Nine: Levinas, “The Name of a Dog”

Week Ten: Agamben, The Open

Week Eleven: Agamben, The Open

Week Twelve: Derrida, The Animal that therefore I am

Week Thirteen: Derrida, The Animal that therefore I am

Week Fourteen: Derrida, The Animal that therefore I am

Week Fifteen: Student presentations of ideas for final papers & Conclusion