Hello everyone! In August the annual conference theme is “The Educative Power of Sociology” so in this newsletter we are highlighting some of the Animals and Society classes taught by our section members. It delights me that so many universities are starting to teach animals and society courses in both graduate and undergraduate programs. There is no part of society that is not touched by other animals and our relationships with them. For those in our section, it is obvious that interactions and relationships between humans and other animals are a core part of understanding our society, culture, inequalities, and more. However, this topic has largely been marginalized and unexplored within sociology. The fact that our section only has 105 members highlights this fact. But small does not mean insignificant. As this issue highlights, our members are publishing books and papers, educating others through colloquiums, working in a variety of fields, teaching important classes, advocating for animals (human and nonhuman), and more.

It would be an oversight to talk about education and not also take this opportunity to mention our student members. It is the student members who turns us from small into mighty! Over a fifth of our section members are students. Not only do these students make our section viable, but they are the ones who are expanding this area of study and solidifying Animals and Society as a key sociological area of inquiry.

Let's all continue to educate and inspire others to better understand animals and society. And, hopefully, in that pursuit we will also continue to be educated by one another and inspired to improve the world for other animals.

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

This year's Membership Committee is continuing the Sponsorship Drive to help grow our section. Students need to be ASA members already. These directions illustrate the step-by-step process members can take to sponsor a new student member through gifting their section membership fee (just $5). You can also email carol.glasser@mnsu.edu for more details.

The idea behind this sort of membership drive is that we all likely had someone introduce us to the field of Animals & Society. Sometimes all it takes is a simple invitation to find a meaningful place for yourself in the field. Instead of calling for students to join on their own, this personal invitation from a sponsor could better help them feel welcomed and willing to explore a new area.

Please consider reaching out to a student who you think could find their place in our section and invite them to join by offering to sponsor them!

SAVE THE DATE!

AUG. 18

This year ASA annual meeting is in Philadelphia, PA from Aug 17-21. All of the Animals & Society section will on Friday, August 18. We hope to see you there!
Animals & Society is a large-format course that explores key social science concepts via human-animal studies. What makes this course a blast to teach is that it is a general education course – 800 or so students are automatically enrolled each Fall, often freshman, who likely have no idea what they’re in for. Thus, for many, it is their first time thinking critically about non-human animals. The vast diversity represented in perspectives and backgrounds truly adds to the course – we learn so much from the international students, especially. Watching these students process, discuss and critically think about topics such as human exceptionalism, industrial animal agricultural, primate rights, and more, is an absolute pleasure.

We focus on topics that highlight our complicated relationship with animal others and how that sheds light on who we are as human animals, often pulling in cross-cultural and historical perspectives to emphasize the dynamic nature of these interactions. We delve into politically and socially spicy topics by first using a “fuzzy filter” of sorts, understanding institutional discrimination via “dangerous dog ordinances” and gender identity by debating whether your dog cares if he has a blue collar or a pink collar, for instance. This approach is not only effective – students are able to process these concepts with less defensiveness and biases – but it’s darn fun. By the end of the class, students have all the tools necessary to further question and consider their significant role, as humans, in a complex multispecies society.

We use two books and an assortment of readings and films for the course. The books are: Humans and Other Animals: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Human-Animal Interactions by Samantha Hurn, and Ishmael by Daniel Quinn. The Hurn book adds examples and background to our themes throughout the course, and Ishmael is a fantastic book for getting students to step out of – and critically examine – the cultural bubble they live inside and how it influences their relationship with their environment.

Topically, the course begins by looking at how Sociology has approached (ignored/downplayed) non-human animals. Then we turn to biological and evolutionary connections, examining what we share with other species, and discussing implications of what it means to be an “animal.” Next we discuss pre-historical and historical relationships between humans and other animals. We then turn to philosophical arguments that have been made about other animals, our relationship to/with them (including shifting definitions of the “boundary” between ‘us and them’), and how they should be treated. In the next section, we spend several class periods covering different roles animals have had in society, including as: 1) food and clothing; 2) pets, workers, and entertainers; 3) objects used/observed in research; and 4) objects to be managed or protected (wildlife). After this, we look at ways animals have been part of social deviance, from “furries” and vegetarianism/veganism to animal cruelty/abuse and the “link” to abuse/violence between humans. We then turn to exploring the myriad ways that animals have figured into symbolic culture, including in language, religion, art and literature. We then cover public opinion/attitudes toward animals and their treatment. We end the course by looking at various social movements that have focused on animals (including animal welfare, animal rights, and pro-animal use movements).

I especially love teaching this class. Sociology is an eye-opening field. But, sociologically (and beyond!) studying the topic of non-human animals is even more so. When I first developed the course (in 2007) the material made me question so many things that I thought I knew about the world. Some of the students who have taken the course have noted this effect as well. This is simultaneously an exceptionally energizing and sad course to teach. While this can likely be said about many courses, it is particularly apt in this case.
ANDREA LAURENT-SIMPSON
ANIMALS AND SOCIETY

As a Research Assistant Professor at Southern Methodist University, I teach Soci 3331, Animals and Society. This course is one of my absolute favorites to teach because I built it as a methodology course that would immerse students in data collection and analysis about human animal interaction. Students begin the semester by learning about in-depth interviewing as a qualitative methodology and earning a CITI certificate in human subject research. Once we have these items down, students pitch research proposals alongside annotated bibliographies regarding various HAI topics. I’ve had so many interesting, creative ideas put forth! Projects have run the gamut from comparison of treatment of CAFO pigs by intermediaries to deer raised for hunting leases; homeless pet owners as high barrier clients with few sheltering options; identity formation of zookeepers as impacted by HAI; and countless others. Once their projects are approved, students spend the rest of the semester collecting interviews, learning how to code data, and writing results for their final paper. Some semesters, I also have students create a semester long journal of visual sociology that they must maintain as we move through various units of material. Each entry must provide original photography taken by the student and related to 3 pieces of research that we have covered within a particular unit. The course is challenging, rigorous, and teaches critical thinking skills; the importance of time management; and networking with individuals and organizations that are often brand new to students.

The following is a blog post written by a student in Carol Glasser’s Animals & Society Class in the Department of Sociology at Minnesota State University Mankato (MNSU). The class has a website and each semester students have the opportunity to write for the website. One section of this course is taught in a correctional setting for students receiving associates degrees from MNSU. This is a blog post written for the website by a student taking the class from within a correctional setting. You can see more student writing on the website here: https://aboutanimalsbyanimals.weebly.com/

CAGED: TAKING ANIMALS & SOCIETY WHILE INCARCERATED
AMANDA PELTIER

“How would you feel if separated from your family, you were shipped to different cities in a cage no less, bound of life, with pain/pleasure techniques, and complete humility for performance under duress, a whip no less. If you were a tiger would you do it? Would you break away, think of escape and if desperate, kill and avow your infinite humiliation and guaranteed death? Do you do it now as a human?”

This is an excerpt from Display Performance and Sport, an article we read in Animals and Society. These words wouldn’t have hit home the way they did had I not been in the circumstance I find myself in. I have been incarcerated at Minnesota Correctional Facility-Shakopee since May of 2014. Had I taken this class outside of this setting, having never had the experience of imprisonment, I wouldn’t have the power to reach the depth of empathy that I currently have for nonhuman animals.

Animals and Society is a course that explores the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals. Students learn vital perspectives in the field of human-animal studies and will explore a range of topics that are relevant to nonhuman animals in our society. Through dialogue and journaling, students will discover their own perspectives on nonhumans and how humans relate to them. Reading and writing assignments will also provide students the opportunity to question their own perspectives and the perspectives of others.

Growing up in the country surrounded by woods, fields, and on a large lake, inspired a great love and respect of nature and nonhuman animals. When one coexists with nature, there is little fear of animals, including insects and snakes. They are a part of your everyday life. You learn from a young age the important roles that each has on the environment. Bees, birds, and butterflies pollinate, spiders eat mosquitoes and other pesky bugs, and humans use up natural resources. That we are as animal, as nonhuman animals.

In my first year of college, long before my incarceration, I focused my studies on psychology and sociology, so this class wasn’t a far stretch from my life or my interests. Taking this class in this environment, however, gives it a whole new experience. Focusing on my education now is easier and more important. I don’t have to have a job, I can’t attend social gatherings, and I have zero responsibilities. This is a very different scenario from my other college experiences. On the other hand, there were some class activities I wish I could have experienced, such as the six-day vegan challenge that our on-campus students do. The extreme concern of security complicated our ability to receive the full experience of the class, but we were able to be flexible and creative. Outside of the classroom, being a felon has a stigma of being a failure, irresponsible, and untrustworthy; thus, making my educational success additionally crucial.
I know what it is to be viewed as an animal and to be treated like one. Being ripped from my family and the surroundings that brought me peace and comfort. Becoming bound of life, existing to not exist, and being publicly humiliated, gave me a greater understanding of what nonhuman animals think and feel. On the television series Yellowstone, a character says: “People like to think we ain’t animals, like we’ve evolved or some shit. You learn quickly in prison that we haven’t. Forget lions, snakes, and shit; we are the worst kind of animals, the most evil.”

I don’t think this line is just about inmates, it’s about all humans. What other species on this planet cages and binds other animals, even their own species, without a second thought? As if that isn’t enough, we find entertainment in it. Lions, tigers, and elephants in the circus bring us family entertainment. Zebras, primates, and giraffes help us educate our children in the zoo’s while we are thoroughly entertained. Orcas, dolphins, and seals put on shows for us in aquariums. Other humans, their trauma, and poor choices bring us mesmerizing news stories and television shows. Is this what being evolved looks like?

Animals, both human and nonhuman, are adaptable. They, or should I say we, will change and evolve to our surroundings. If you cage an animal they will be affected negatively. If you hunt an animal they will go into fight or flight mode. If you kill or capture an animal, many others will be affected. None are perfect. All have choices to make, some will be good and others will be bad choices. All animals have families, relationships, feelings, thoughts, and emotions. All animals are both predator and prey. We as humans fall into all these categories, just as do nonhuman animals. It is from a prison cell, or cage, that realization of this is heightened. It is there that you clearly see other perspectives and that there are so many better options. It is there that you fully embrace the helplessness of nonhuman animals. Where your helplessness and theirs become one.

True empathy is easier to fully obtain when one has walked in the shoes of another. What are we really teaching our children about animals when they aren’t in their natural habitat? What is so entertaining about watching other animals suffer? Why do we find enjoyment in others pain? Why do we feel it appropriate to cage, harm, or cast away those that make mistakes? Do we care what vulnerable situation animals were in, to end up in captivity, both human and nonhuman? Why don’t we do something to change the way we treat animals? Being in captivity, helpless, with no voice puts me in a position to fully understand what nonhuman animals experience at the hands of humans.

There is a minimal amount of stimulation in prison, so I try to take every opportunity I can to maintain my mental and emotional health. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be able to receive continued education. This class felt as though I had a voice; if only for a semester and through the eyes of other species, I was heard. This opportunity through MSU Mankato, shows me that I matter. That there are people that are willing to take the first steps for change. That there is still hope in humanity. What steps will you take today to make a positive change?

Author Bio: Amanda Peltier is a student at Minnesota State University Mankato, while incarcerated on a 30 year to life sentence at Minnesota Correctional Facility- Shakopee. Amanda, a mother of four, is from a small farming town in west central Minnesota, where she has enjoyed being with nature and nonhuman animals of all kinds. She has a passion for psychology and sociology, as well as, prison reform.
Greetings fellow section members! My name is Mark Suchyta and I am running to serve as your section chair. I am currently a visiting professor at Butler University in Indianapolis, where I am teaching general sociology courses as well as an animals and society course. I am in my second year as a section council member and have also been on our membership committee for three years. Our section is very dear to my heart. Like many of you have expressed, I find the small, intimate, and supportive atmosphere to be an oasis that has allowed me to network with great scholars and new friends and become more confident in my work as an academic and activist.

I believe our section is destined to grow as the question of how we can live best with other animals (and the rest of life on earth) is one of the critical questions of our age. However, as a small section, we are fragile in that a lot of work is required to ensure we can meet our ASA requirements (e.g. obtaining sufficient submissions for our conference sessions, recruiting candidates to run for section officer positions). As chair, my priorities would include continuing to seek innovative ways to recruit new members with a particular focus on the increasing number of graduate students interested in animal studies. Working with our fabulous section officers, I would develop various forms of engagement for networking to ensure all members feel welcome and empowered to participate in the opportunities our section provides. Finally, I would work to highlight and celebrate the important scholarship, teaching, and activism you are all partaking in both within and outside of ASA. I look forward to seeing you at future section events and I thank you for your consideration.

Chair Elect (choose 1)
- Jordan Besek, Assistant Professor of Sociology, SUNY at Buffalo
- Mark Suchyta, Visiting Professor of sociology and Criminology, Butler University

Council (choose 2)
- Sarah May Lindsay, Department of Sociology, McMaster University
- Crystal Vuole, Program Chair - Human Services/Sociology John P. Burke School of Public Service and Education
- Andrea Laurent-Simpson, Research Assistant Professor, Lecturer Department of Sociology, Southern Methodist University
- Michael Briscoe, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Criminology, and Anthropology Colorado State University Pueblo

Student Rep (choose 1; running unopposed)
- Victoria Brockett, Doctoral Student, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago

We have great candidates for the upcoming section elections. Here is a full list of candidates. Their official candidate statements will be made available to you by ASA when the elections open on April 18.
Research conducted by Leslie Irvine and Casara Andre, DVM, on pet fatalities during Colorado's 2021 Marshall Fire was published in Animals 13(3) ("Pet Loss in an Urban Firestorm: Grief and Hope after Colorado's Marshall Fire"). Their research received extensive media coverage over the fire's December 20 anniversary. They have collaborated with Animal Help Now on the development of a pet rescue app. PetHelp&Rescue will be released for iOS in early 2023, and for Android soon thereafter. The app will enable pet owner to create trusted networks of people who can access their homes and rescue their pets in case they are away during an emergency. Here is some of the coverage of the research:

- "To save our pets, we need to know our neighbors.' Lessons from the Marshall Fire | CU Boulder Today | University of Colorado Boulder

This past October, members of our section participated in the "Ecocultures Workshop" held at Michigan State University. As this article from Michigan State points out, "The group brought together scholars that work at the intersection of environment, animals and humans in the tradition of human ecology." The event was intended to workshop papers, many of which prominently highlighted the topic of animals and society, that will be submitted for a special edition of Human Ecology Review that highlights the legacies of Linda Kalof, who recently assumed emeritus status and is a pioneer in our field, as well as Thomas Dietz, a mentor to several section members, who will be assuming emeritus status this summer.

Mark Suchyta successfully defended his dissertation, titled "Social and Environmental Influences on Subjective Well-Being", this past summer. He is now a Visiting Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Butler University in Indianapolis.

Erin Kidder accepted a tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor of Animal Studies at Eckerd College, a position that started in Fall 2022.

**PUBLICATIONS**


NEW BOOKS OUT!

Regarding Animals, is now out in a 2nd edition. Arnold Arluke, Clinton Sanders, and Leslie Irvine revised the 1996 book to include new and updated content. Methods developed since publication of the first edition, such as multi-species ethnography, are discussed among the approaches to studying human-animal interactions. Topics examined in the new substantive chapters include inequality and pet ownership, the representation of animals in social and legacy media, emotional “dirty work” among veterinary technicians, and animal abuse among adolescents.

The Creative Lives of Animals offers readers intimate glimpses of creativity in the lives of animals, from elephants to alligators to ants. Drawing on a growing body of scientific research, Carol Gigliotti unpacks examples of creativity demonstrated by animals through the lens of the creative process, an important component of creative behavior, and offers new thinking on animal intelligence, emotion, and self-awareness. With examples of elaborate dams built by beavers or the lavishly decorated bowers of bowerbirds, Gigliotti provides a new perspective on animals as agents in their own lives, as valuable contributors to their world and ours, and as guides in understanding how creativity may contribute to conserving the natural world (NYU Press).

ANIMALS & SOCIETY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

The Animals and Society Colloquium Series and partnership with Animals and Society Institute has continued and we have had wonderful and informative speakers this year.

More about the Series:
These colloquia are intended to provide a forum for ASI and ASA Animals and Society Section members to share their emerging and ongoing research and projects with others and to get feedback from colleagues. The goal of the colloquia is 1) to give the presenter a forum for constructive feedback on projects that are in progress and 2) to provide human-animal studies scholars opportunities to stay abreast of emerging research and projects in the field.

Who can present? All members ASI and the ASA Animals and Society Section–students, professors, and those working outside of academia—are encouraged to present and attend. We will meet via Zoom so that we can attend from wherever we work and live.

What can I present? Pretty much anything related to your work in human-animal studies! The colloquia can be used as a forum to present completed research projects, practice presentations, and practice job talks; to get feedback on new study designs or works in progress; or share public/advocacy initiatives stemming from your work.

Who can attend? These talks are free and open to the public!

Fall/Spring Colloquiums
October 2022
The Relational Horse: Including Animal Others’ Perspectives in Our Relationships and Studies
Dr. Gala Argent, Human-Animal Studies Program Director, Animals & Society Institute; Faculty in Animal Studies at Eastern Kentucky University & Dr. Jeannette Vaught, Lecturer at California State University, Los Angeles

November 2022
Jobs Panel: Nonacademic Social Science Career Paths in Human-Animal Studies
Featuring Molly Tamulevick, Michigan State Director, HSUS; Dr. Theresa Tyler, Director, DoGenius Institute; Dr. Miranda K. Workman, Shelter Behavior Training Liaison, Behavioral Sciences Team, ASPCA

February 2023
Service, Support, or Companion?: Species, Ability, and Care in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Shelters
Dr. Sarah May Lindsay, Department of Sociology, McMaster University

Recordings of all past talks are posted on the ASI website:
https://www.animalsandsociety.org/resources/resources-for-students/colloquium/
If you are interested in presenting contact carol.glasser@mnsu.edu

You are appreciated for all you do for our field of study and sociology. Thank you for all you do for the earth and other animals.