

Spring 2021

## Philosophy 2458: Animals and Philosophy

Instructor: Evan Thomas, PhD

TR 11:10-12:30pm

Online



The subject of non-human animals raises profound philosophical questions. One reason for this is that we commonly think about and define our own humanity in terms of our similarities and differences to animals. Beginning especially with Darwin, biological science has told us that we *are* animals. But, it is commonly assumed that we have distinctively human qualities which raise us above the animals. Because of the interconnections between ideas of animality and ideas of humanity, an investigation into the nature of animals is simultaneously an investigation into what it means to be human. For the same reason, the subject of non-human animals provides a fruitful entry point for thinking about foundational questions in the major fields of philosophy. In this class we'll engage foundational philosophical topics by thinking through questions such as the following. What ethical duties, if any, do we have towards animals? What is the relationship between movements for animal rights and social justice movements? Do animals have consciousness? What are the similarities and differences between human and animal cognition? Do animals have free will? What is the proper role of animals in society and the state?

This course fulfills the GE in Cultures and Ideas