ANIMAL STORIES
FA_ANST GA_2500_1_001
4:55 PM - 7:25 PM
19 West 4th, Room C-9

Professor: Paul Greenberg

Syllabus as of September 12, 2022
***This syllabus may be modified on a weekly basis***

Class Hours: Mondays 4:55-7:25
Class will be conducted in person

Office Hours: Mondays 12:00-2:00
Office hours will be conducted virtually

Instructor Contact Email: pg472@nyu.edu
(please use only this email address for correspondence)

I Overview

Science might give us the facts, but stories change hearts and minds. In this creativity-focused course, students will engage with professional authors, documentarians, screenwriters, and other artists and over the course of the semester develop narratives about the animal world. Our inquiries into the nature of narrative will be coupled with a study of the hard science of animal lifecycles and the phases that make up the time non-humans spend on earth. Some of the work we’ll look at may be familiar to you. Some of it may seem parochial or aimed at a younger audience. But the stories we’ll look at will have succeeded in one key way: they will have reached a large audience and inspired a strong emotional response from that audience. Our question throughout is why? Why do some stories “work” and others don’t? What can we learn from stories that found an audience? How can we make our own stories have an emotional effect on others? The goal of the course is to impart a working knowledge of how animals live their lives and how humans tell compelling stories about those lives.

II Assignments, expectations and grading
While there will be some academic reading in the course, students are encouraged to produce creative work which appeals to as wide an audience as possible. The number one rule I would like you to follow is:

**Strive to produce work that you yourself would want to read/see/hear**

**A. Written Assignments**

1. **One page animal story midterm.** At mid-term you will write a 1000-word animal narrative with a beginning, middle, and end.
   Grade percentage: 20%

2. **Final Treatment.** For your final project you will develop the animal story you presented in your midterm into a fuller treatment for a longer creative work. Possible treatments could be for a feature film, a nonfiction or fiction book, a podcast, a television series, a documentary, interactive digital media or any kind of long-form narrative story telling.
   Grade percentage: 40%

**B. Oral Assignments**

1. **Book presentation:** Pairs of you will be assigned a nonfiction and a fiction book that you will present live to the class. Presenters of fiction work will analyze the narrative and character mechanics of their assigned book. Presenters of nonfiction work will share with students the key science-based lessons imparted by their assigned book.
   Grade percentage: 10%

2. **Guest Speaker Interview:** Pairs of you will be assigned to be the lead interviewers for our guest speaker of the week.
   Grade percentage: 10%

3. **Pitch Sessions:** you will do two, five-minute oral presentation coupled with appropriate slides about your project. The first presentation will be an introductory pitch on October 31. The second will be a fleshed-out pitch giving us a sense of plot turns and character development on December 12th.
   Grade percentage: 10%

4. **Daily attendance and class participation:** Attendance is mandatory and participation will be taken into account in determining an overall class participation grade.
   Note: *Unexcused failure to attend 2 or more classes will result in the loss of the 10% participation grade.*
   Grade percentage for attendance and participation: 10%

**C. Reading/Viewing Assignments**
I will try to keep weekly reading under 100 pages and any video viewing to under 2 hours. Readings/viewing assignments for each week will be posted on NYU Brightspace no less than 3 days in advance of class. Viewing will be made available via web link if possible. A subscription to Netflix or another streaming service will be helpful.

III Policies

A. Late Papers/Extensions/Incompletes:
Late papers without excuse will lose 1/3 letter grade for each day late. Extensions and incompletes will be granted with adequate forewarning.

B. Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to an academic dean. Plagiarism includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes or references; not citing every source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else's work as your own; or copying verbatim from any source. You are subject to the CAS guidelines on plagiarism: cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity

C. Academic Accommodations:

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities 212-998-4980.
NYU Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003-6675
Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114
Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/csd

IV Office Hours

Office hours will be held on Mondays 12:00-2:00 on Zoom. Students wishing to attend office hours should sign up for zoom slots which I'll post Sunday evening. Note there will be no office hours on the following days:
September 5, September 12, November 7

V Guest Speakers
Since this is a graduate seminar, my assumption is that many of you are in the midst of choosing a professional direction. For this reason, I've invited guest speakers from a range of different fields to talk about both the subject we're covering that week and their careers.

**VI Class Structure**

Classes will be organized according to a “theme of the day.” Sometimes the theme will involve elements of narrative storytelling. Other times the focus will be on a particular aspect of animal lives. By studying science-based animal behavior characteristics in parallel with the elements of narrative story-telling methodology, we will strive to lay the foundation for you to create scientifically valid narratives with emotional impact.

A typical class will go something like this:

4:55-5:10 introduction of theme and brief review of assigned readings
5:10-5:30 student book presentation I
5:30-5:50 student book presentation II
5:50 – 6:00 Break/Set up for Guest Interview
6:00-7:00 Guest interview
7:00-7:25 Wrap up discussion

**Note, exceptions to this schedule are:**

- **Class #1 (September 12)** when we’ll do class introductions
- **Class #8 (October 31)** when you’ll pitch your final project to the class
- **Class #14 (December 12)** when you’ll present your fleshed out final project to the class
VII Week by Week Schedule

Class 1, September 12

Theme: Who Are We and What Moves Us About Animal Stories?

Please come to class prepared to answer these three questions:

- Where are you in your academic progress?
- What are your professional goals?
- Tell us about an animal story you love

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD

Class 2, September 19

Theme: Elements of Narrative

Guest Speaker: Cusi Cram, playwright and NYU professor (confirmed)

Student Review Books:
Beyond Words, What Animals Think and Feel

Student Interviewer(s): TBD

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD

Class 3, September 26

Theme: Tales, Fables and other Animals Stories for Children

Guest Speaker: Peter Hirsch, story editor of the PBS Show Arthur (tentative)

Student Review Books:
Native American Tales Retold
Aesop’s Fables

Student Interviewer(s): TBD

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD
Class 4, October 3

**Theme:** Animal Culture and Character

**Guest Speaker:** Carl Safina, author, conservationist (confirmed)

**Student Review Books:**
- *H is for Hawk*
- *Through a Window*

**Student Interviewer(s):** TBD

**Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing:** TBD

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Class 5, October 11 (NOTE CLASS MEETS TUESDAY)

**Theme:** Extinction

**Guest Speaker:** Lanxing Fu, playwright, performance artist (confirmed)

**Student Review Books:**
- *The Last Dog on Earth*
- *The Sixth Extinction*

**Student Interviewer(s):** TBD

**Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing:** TBD

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Class 6, October 17

**Theme:** Compromise and The Hollywood Problem

**Guest Speaker:** Matt Greenberg, screenwriter, Pet Semetary, Reign of Fire (confirmed)

**Student Review Books:**
Rin Tin Tin: The Life and Legend
Adventures in the Screen Trade

Student Interviewer(s): TBD

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD

Class 7, October 24

Theme: Animals as Food

Guest Speaker: Robby Kenner, documentary maker Food Inc. (confirmed)

Student Review Books:
Eating Animals
Barn 8

Student Interviewer(s): TBD

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD

Class 8, October 31

Theme: Pitch Session

Guest Speaker: Eden Wurmfeld, feature/documentary producer (confirmed)

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD

Class 9, November 7

Theme: Animal Perceptions

Guest Speaker: TBD

Student Review Books:
An Immense World, Paul Young
Student Interviewer(s): TBD

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD
Class 10, November 14

Theme: Voice/Music/Sound

Guest Speaker: MC Paul Barman, rapper, producer, songwriter (confirmed)

Student Review Books:
Nightingales of Berlin
Fox 8

Student Interviewer(s): TBD

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD

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Class 11, November 21

Theme: Prison, Torture, and Escape

Guest Speaker: Robin Huffman, painter (confirmed)

Student Review Books:
Watership Down
Beneath the Surface

Student Interviewer(s): TBD

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD

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Class 12, November 28

Theme: Individual Story Consultations

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Class 13, December 5

Theme: Look and Feel

Guest Speaker: Jim Gettinger, PIXAR (confirmed)

Student Review Books:
The Art of Patience
The Shell Collector

Student Interviewer(s): TBD

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD

Class 14, December 12

Theme: Final Project Presentations

Full Class Assigned Reading/Viewing: TBD