

DOING MULTISPECIES ETHNOGRAPHY

CHID 250A: SUMMER SYLLABUS, KATHRYN GILLESPIE

Multispecies ethnographers are studying the host of organisms whose lives and deaths are linked to human social worlds...Multispecies ethnography centers on how a multitude of organisms' livelihoods shape and are shaped by political, economic and cultural forces.

(Kirksey and Helmreich 2010: 545)

Students enrolled in this course should gain a better understanding of the workings of the U.S. food system and the experience of animals within this system. Using animals in the food system as a case study, this course will explore notions of power and difference, ethics and responsibility, and creativity in reimagining the status quo. This course will push the boundaries of how we think about different ways of being in the world.

In this experiential learning seminar, students will have the opportunity to explore the place of animals in the United States food system through experiential learning in the classroom and at Pigs Peace Sanctuary. As a lens through which to understand the lives of animals in the food system, we will focus our work together on the 'multispecies ethnography', a methodological trend in anthropology dedicated to understanding the inner lives of animals and the impacts on their lives and bodies of their encounters with humans.

Time spent in the classroom will be dedicated to engaging with readings, film and presentations related to the subject of animals in the food system and understanding the theory behind our ethnographic fieldwork. Our time at Pigs Peace sanctuary will be dedicated to conducting an ethnography of a pig who lives there and a geography of the sanctuary itself. Through our work together, we will explore creative possibilities for pushing new boundaries in how we think about ethics and farmed animals in our private and public lives.

Course Requirements:

1. Required Texts:

- *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, Elisabeth Tova Bailey
- *Eating Animals*, Jonathan Safran Foer
- *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows*, Melanie Joy

2. One day a week the class will travel to Pigs Peace Sanctuary in Stanwood, WA for an experiential learning component to the course.

3. Success in the course is dependent upon attendance and participation in seminar meetings and sanctuary visits. One goal of the course is to create an environment where all students (even those who tend to be on the quiet side) feel comfortable contributing to the discussion. In order to participate fully and be a dynamic member of the classroom community, it is imperative that the readings be completed prior to our seminar meetings.
4. Success in the course is also dependent on the timely completion of the following **required assignments**.

Assignments:

Ethnography (*due July 22*):

During the quarter, you will be working on conducting an ethnography of a pig at the sanctuary. We will be reading two pieces of writing during Week 1 on critical ethnography and multispecies ethnography to frame considerations for how to conduct multispecies ethnographies of pigs at the sanctuary. *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* should also serve as a framework for understanding one particular way of doing multispecies ethnography, as well as encourage you to think carefully about different ways of being in the world. Through these ethnographic projects, you should consider (depending on the particular pig you work with) topics such as: disability, reproductive politics (breeding, sterilization, etc.), abuse and neglect, interspecies friendship and love, trauma and recovery, emotion and intellect, encounters of conflict among pigs, the role of the pig in capitalism, the impacts of capitalism on the pig, and so on.

Your ethnography should be a minimum of 8-10 pages. You will be given a journal for field notes, which I hope you will use to take notes during your time at the sanctuary and during your reflections afterward. [NOTE: if you like, you can use the journal I give you for both field notes *and* your journal assignment (see below). If you choose to use it for both, please divide it in half and use the first half for your journal and the second half for field notes.] The organization and layout of your ethnography can take any form, but should consider in depth:

1. **Your positionality as a researcher in relation to the pig you are studying.** What is your relationship to pigs and farmed animals? What limitations and/or advantages do you see in your ability to tell this pig's story? What difficulties are there in interpreting an Other's perspective, especially when that Other is a member of another species?
2. **A geography of the sanctuary.** How do you understand the sanctuary *as a place*? What ethical and political commitments guide life at the sanctuary? How are the spaces designed with the pigs in mind? In other words, how is the sanctuary a place, first and foremost, for animals and not humans? What role does the sanctuary as a place play in

society? How does the sanctuary fit into a capitalist economy (e.g., how is the sanctuary funded, how does the sanctuary challenge the commodification of the animal, and does the sanctuary commodify animals)? Does it challenge our ideas of how animals should/could live? What ethical ambiguities do you see in the sanctuary model?

3. **An ethnographic analysis of the pig you are studying.** Who is this pig? What does she like and dislike? What things are meaningful to her? How does she spend her time? What is her background? Does she carry any lasting trauma from her time before the sanctuary? How does the sanctuary allow pigs to flourish and what are your ethical concerns about pigs at the sanctuary? In addition to your own fieldwork on the pigs at the sanctuary, you should talk with your classmates and conduct further research on pigs more generally. The book, *Whole Hog*, by Lyall Watson, is a useful resource. Judy Woods, the sanctuary director is also very happy to answer any questions you have. She is a wealth of information and a revolutionary in pig care.
4. **Reflection on multispecies ethnography.** Multispecies ethnography is a new kind of methodology and there is much room for exploration and evolution in how this ethnographic work is done. What have you learned through this process? What aspects of your research should be essential aspects of multispecies ethnographies in the future? How would you change your ethnographic approach if you did this project again? Why are multispecies ethnographies important? How do the readings from Week 1 on ethnographies inform your work and what are the limitations of the perspectives outlined in the readings?

Journal (*due July 22*):

Students should keep a journal (in a notebook, blog, or otherwise) detailing reactions/responses to the course material and their time at the Sanctuary. These responses can be written in an informal style, and students should write **at least 2 entries per week** if not more. Entries should engage specifically with points of interest in the readings, in class discussion, sanctuary visits, etc. and should demonstrate critical thinking.

Final Project Presentation (*July 22*):

On the final day of the quarter, each student will be expected to give a presentation to the class on their ethnography. Your presentations should be 10 minutes long and you can use any visuals you wish. You should give a sense of the pig you've been working with, a geography of the sanctuary, what you learned, etc.

Grading

- Class Participation 30%
- Ethnography 40% (35% ethnography; 5% final project presentation)

- Journal 30%

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Framings and Introductions

Tuesday June 24, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- In class, watch *Food, Inc.*
- Introductions

Wednesday June 25, 2014 - AT THE SANCTUARY

- Tour and welcome to the sanctuary

Thursday June 26, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- Kirksey, Eben and Stefan Helmreich (2010). "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography," *Cultural Anthropology*, 25 (4): 545-576.
- Madison, D. Soyini (2005). Critical ethnography: method, ethics and performance. In *Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics and Performance*. SAGE.

Week 2: Doing Multispecies Ethnography

Tuesday July 1, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- Tova Bailey, Elisabeth. *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*

Wednesday July 2, 2014 - AT THE SANCTUARY

- Day 1 of ethnographic research with pigs.

Thursday July 3, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- In class viewing of *Peaceable Kingdom*

Week 3: Eating Animals

Tuesday July 8, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- Safran-Foer, Jonathan (2009). *Eating Animals*. Little, Brown and Company.

Wednesday July 9, 2014 - AT THE SANCTUARY

- Geography of the sanctuary - understanding the sanctuary as a place

Thursday July 10, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- IN CLASS: Talk by Katie on the dairy industry

Week 4: Understanding Carnism; Rethinking Human-Animal Relations

Tuesday July 15, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- Joy, Melanie. *Why we love dogs, eat pigs and wear cows.*

Wednesday July 16, 2014 - AT THE SANCTUARY

- Day 2 of ethnographic research with pigs.

Thursday July 17, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- In class viewing of *The Ghosts in Our Machine*

Week 5:

Tuesday July 22, 2014 - IN THE CLASSROOM

- Final ethnography presentations

Wednesday July 23, 2014 - AT THE SANCTUARY

- Volunteer at the sanctuary