

CSTS218: Significant Others
Animals and Androids in Greek and Latin Literature



Contents of syllabus & page numbers:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Course description (p. 1-2) | 8. Class contribution & engagement (p. 5-6) |
| 2. Learning approaches (p. 2) | 9. Attendance & absences (p. 6) |
| 3. Prerequisites/expectations (p. 3) | 10. Response papers (p. 7-8) |
| 4. Goals (p. 3) | 11. Technology/devices policy (p. 8) |
| 5. Grading/Course Portfolio (p. 4) | 12. Calendar of readings & assignments (pp. 9-12) |
| 6. Contacting/Addressing professor (p. 4) | |
| 7. Accessibility & disability (p. 4-5) | |

Course website:

<http://www.professorsilverblank.com/animals-and-androids.html> (pw: Sapph0)

Classroom and time: Stokes 16. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00pm-2:30pm. (Note: we officially “start” class at 1:05. You are expected to be in the classroom, situated, and ready to start at 1:05.)

Instructor: Professor Hannah Silverblank

Pronouns: She/her/hers

Email: hsilverb@haverford.edu

Office: Hall 204

Office hours: Tuesday, 2:35-3:30pm AND Friday 11:35am-12:30am

1. Course description

This course considers the role of nonhuman life in the literary, cultural, and religious imagination of the ancient Mediterranean, with a particular focus on the relationships between humans, animals, and automata.

When we explore literary representations of animals and of artificial life forms, we must grapple with what it means to be human, to live, and to die – for different kinds of bodies, during different eras, in different parts of the world.

In this course, students will read thematically selected works from Greek and Latin literature in translation. Through this material, students will consider the ways in which the concept of the human can be both threatened and expanded in concert and conflict with animal and artificial life.

Students in this course will examine significant nonhuman others in order to discern the many ways animals and automata sit at the heart of existential questions about the nature of humanity, and present ethical puzzles about the politics of cross-species interactions.

We will consider and question the boundary between biological and conceptual ontologies, and we will strive to respond to the question of how we draw lines between beings and what sorts of consequences and actions emerge from these categorical bounds.

Literary texts will be complemented by visual representations of animal and artificial beings in Greek and Roman art provided in class activities and discussions throughout the semester.

The final weeks of the semester will consider 20th and 21st century cinematic and television representations of animal and android life. These video texts will provide the foundations for group consideration of the ethical, social, political, and aesthetic questions that surround humans' relationships to nonhuman beings in modern contexts that knowingly and unknowingly respond to ancient ways of grappling with some of humanity's significant others.

2. Basic Learning Approaches: Reflection, Discussion, and Interactive Collaboration

This course's central components include discussion, a portfolio of response papers, and collaborative participation in the course's Philadelphia Area Creative Collaboration project.

Our class sessions will be mainly organized around thematic discussions of literary, philosophical, and historiographical texts from the ancient Mediterranean world. In order that these discussions serve as meaningful opportunities for collective learning, students will be expected to read thoroughly and think deeply in their independent work and extracurricular life. Although discussions will be structured and designed by the professor, it is essential that students work toward the generous sharing of areas of curiosity, interest, and thoughtful responses to the reading materials.

Class activities will also include individual reflection and writing exercises alongside collaborative discussion. To complement the literary and theoretical implications of our readings, we will also participate in a collaboration with local artists and a non-profit partner, including Wit López and Actors Without Boundaries. Our class will be visited by our PACC partners on at least two occasions, and students will attend events and workshops with our partners. This interactive learning component of the course will allow students to experience the links as well as the tensions between classroom learning and practical application of academic discussion through a community-based collaborative learning and service experience. Through writing, discussion, and project-based reflection, students will learn to grapple with the course themes in an academic context while also gaining experience in the application of academic concepts in extracurricular local contexts.

3. Prerequisites / Expectations:

This course is open to students who have not yet studied or encountered ancient literature before. Students should be aware that no previous study of this particular topic, literary area, or era is required, but the course will emphasize advanced critical analysis of texts and cultural products. As a result of this, the course may not be the most natural fit for students who have not taken text-based courses before, but you may also discuss any concerns about this with the professor in order to develop strategies for success in the class.

This course will emphasize reading, writing, communication, collaboration, and critical discussion skills commensurate with the 200-level. Whatever “commensurate with the 200-level” means to you, I cannot say, but I can say what it means in my teaching practice: I push my students to attain articulate expression of complex and original ideas in response to texts and discussions. I require my students to show serious consideration and appreciation for one another’s perspectives as a foundation on which meaningful analysis and intellectual development can take place. You must also be willing to attend to the details of what you are reading; to take an active role in working with the professor, your classmates, or the academic support services provided by the college when you are struggling; to spend time in serious thought about the material you are assigned in this class and how it can change the way you think.

4. Goals:

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| 1. Foundational goal: to develop a heightened grasp and awareness of the role of nonhuman life in the literary, cultural, and religious imagination of the ancient Mediterranean | as humans within broader animal, ecological, and technological contexts |
| 2. To expose ourselves to a variety of ancient and modern representations of the relationships between humans, animals, and artificial life forms, and to gain a fuller understanding of our source materials and primary readings in themselves | 5. To develop our capacities and intellectual frameworks for developing careful and considered relationships with other human and nonhuman beings |
| 3. To learn about the Greek and Roman uses of and thoughts concerning animal life, hopefully with the side effect of reaching a heightened awareness of the archaic, classical, and Hellenistic conceptions of humanity | 6. To improve our skills in written and verbal communication |
| 4. To engage in thoughtful, rigorous, and playful interrogation of challenging questions about how we see ourselves | 7. To improve our skills in creative critical analysis |
| | 8. To produce work, individually and in groups, that allows us to share our learning beyond the classroom community (via PACC et al.) |
| | 9. To allow all participants to find personal meaning and growth in the experience of studying humanity’s conception of its ‘significant others’ in their various forms |

5. Grading of the Course Portfolio:

- 20%: **Class participation, contribution, and engagement**
- 25%: **Response papers & reflections** (14 total, 1-1.5 pages each)
 - 10-12 response papers on weekly readings
 - 2-4 response papers on PACC events
- 30%: **Semester project**
 - 5%: Proposal with annotated bibliography
 - 15%: Artist's statement
 - 10%: Project
- 15%: **Final reflection essay**

6. Contacting & addressing Professor Silverblank:

My pronouns are she/her/hers, and I prefer to be addressed as Professor Silverblank (not Miss/Ms./Mrs. Silverblank) or Professor in person and in online communication.

Want to set up a meeting during office hours?

- ⇒ I encourage but do not require you to send a Slack message to let me know you're coming and what you'd like to discuss! (Helps prevent waiting times & traffic jams!)

Can't meet during my office hours, but want to meet anyway?

- ⇒ **Message me on Slack** with a request for a meeting and some days/times when you have availabilities.
- ⇒ In your message, **include information about your goals for the meeting and any questions or concerns** you want to address. This information helps us both stay organized!

Corresponding online: I check my Slack messages for the course twice daily: once in the mornings, and once in late afternoons. You can always expect a reply within 24 hours of messaging me, and I expect the same from you.

Anonymous contact: This course has an online suggestion box where you can provide anonymous feedback, accessibility requests, celebrations, and constructive criticisms. I will check the box weekly: <http://freesuggestionbox.com/pub/tpxawxr>

7. Note about accessibility & disability:

One of my goals as the professor of this course is to create an environment and a learning praxis that provides equal opportunities to grow for a variety of learning styles. Although I will always have more to learn as a teacher, I will strive to make this course as accessible and inclusive as possible for you all, and I

sincerely hope that you will consider yourselves my partners in this process. Your input helps to make these courses better and more accessible for students in the future. If you know that you benefit from certain kinds of class activities, exercises, or learning formats, please do let me know, either anonymously online or by getting in touch with me directly.

“Haverford College is committed to providing equal access to students with a disability. If you have (or think you have) a learning difference or disability – including mental health, medical, or physical impairment - please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu. The Coordinator will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations.

*Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use their accommodations in this course should share their verification letter with me and also make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss their specific accommodations. Please note that accommodations are **not retroactive** and require advance notice to implement.*

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice if they are to be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this accommodation from the Coordinator of Access and Disability Services and then must speak with me. Other class members will need to be aware that this class may be recorded.”

8. Course contribution & engagement

Your *class ‘contribution & engagement’ grade* should be fairly transparent to yourself and to me. Every day of class, you have the opportunity to gain THREE points towards your class participation grade. If you come to class on time, you will gain 1 point. If you come to class on time and you show that you are engaged and prepared (by answering/asking questions, sharing ideas, working collaboratively in small group discussion, sharing ideas in larger group discussion, etc.), you can gain 2 points. If you do all of this in a way that shows deep thought, preparation, and engagement with the material, you will gain 3 points. If you miss class and do not have an excused absence, you will gain 0 points for this day. To gain a high mark in this component of your grade, make sure that you come to class with questions, thoughts, points of curiosity, and responses to the readings.

In summary:

1 point for timely attendance;

2 points for engaged, prepared, and timely presence and attendance.

3 points for thoroughly engaged, collaborative, prepared, thoughtful presence and attendance.

What do you need to do to earn a 3 each day? You need to work with your classmates in small groups, share answers and questions with the class, or be willing to engage with questions when asked, and demonstrate that you’ve been dedicating yourself to the material! Showing enthusiasm, reactions, and curiosity toward the material (in class or on the Slack discussion forum) also helps, and is a good way to contribute to the

class community for folks who aren't yet comfortable speaking as much in class. This is a class where all students are expected to work together to create an environment, collaboratively, in which sharing ideas and questions is comfortable, fun, and rewarding. If you're not comfortable speaking in class at first, we can work together to find ways to make this process more manageable for you. Remember, the classroom is a space that provides an opportunity for you to develop your skills in verbal communication and literary analysis. You're expected to learn throughout the semester, and learning requires regular practice!

Strong participation comes from sharing thoughtful insights, questions, or curiosities on a regular basis in class, but you should not feel as though you should raise your hand and ramble just for the sake of getting "points." Although there's no particular pressure on you to deliver perfectly articulated points – that's what we're *learning* to do in class together! – it's better to emphasize quality over quantity in terms of class participation. Think about how you can build on other students' points and collaboratively stake out new intellectual ground with your peers, rather than thinking of yourself as an isolated individual who needs to score a certain number of participation points by talking x number of times. This will be a more meaningful exercise that will prepare you for college seminars, and this strategy will also make classes far more interesting for all of us!

You do not need to have every reading 'figured out' ahead of time – I still haven't figured them out myself – but you do need to show that you've thought critically about the reading. If you are naturally shy or uncomfortable speaking in a group for *any* reason, please meet with me to discuss strategies. I promise not to be scary or harsh with you, and I can offer good strategies to help you succeed in this aspect of the course!

9. Attendance & Absences:

I hope that you come to each class with **strong preparation** and a **willingness to contribute to our intellectual community**. Each class session will include valuable knowledge production, coverage of material, writing exercises, and skill development, and so consistent and routine attendance will support your overall learning process.

What if I'm sick, or have a religious holiday, or have an unexpected emergency?

You are permitted **two excused absences** over the course of the semester (i.e., the number of class meetings in a week), if you get in touch with me over email to announce that you will miss class. Other professors tend to expect explanations for absences, but I don't need to know the reasons for your absences unless you want to share.

What should I do if I accidentally sleep through my alarm?

If you accidentally slept in a bit and would be late to class, please come anyway, but understand that it is inappropriate to ask questions that would've been addressed in the section of class that you missed. You can catch up by asking me *after class* if you missed any important announcements, and you can get notes from your classmates. **Three late arrivals to class count as an unexcused absence.**

If you are *well enough to come to class but for some reason could not complete your homework*, I encourage you to attend class anyway (particularly if you can inform me over email or in person in advance of class/at the start of class that you are unprepared).

10. Response Papers:

You will keep a reading response journal throughout the semester. You are expected to write one-page responses to the assigned readings each week, which you will post on the discussion forums on Slack the morning of each class. Since class starts at 1:00pm, you will need to make your posts by 8:30am each Thursday, in order to give me time to read them and tailor the shape of our discussion accordingly.

The purpose of the journal is three-fold.

- (1) Firstly, your journal writing will help you to **digest and consider the readings in your own way before coming into the classroom discussion**. This is important because it allows us to build ideas together, and because we will all find ourselves in a mode of critical engagement, thoughtfulness, and curiosity – rather than arriving to class in a passive manner. This activity can also help quieter students collect themselves and their ideas in a way that makes sharing ideas feel more comfortable.
- (2) Secondly, this practice allows you to **work your writing muscles** on a regular basis. The more often you write, even if in small bursts, the more comfortable you will feel expressing yourself in written words.
- (3) Thirdly, **you will be able to engage with your peers' ideas ahead of our class session**. This allows you to collaborate and work together, and it also allows you to gather thoughts and responses at your own pace.

When I've used reading response journals in the past, my students were amazed at how much journaling improved their writing, and they also were very proud of the amount and variety of writing they had done throughout the semester. One student copied and pasted all of his entries into a Word document and was very proud that he wrote over 10,000 words in his journals – the length of my Master's dissertation! At least two of my former students have joined the 10,000-word club, and you can too. Small doses of writing can build up to big intellectual achievements and breakthroughs!

The **content** of your journals can be varied.

- You may include short and focused analysis of a passage.
- You can tackle thematic or conceptual questions broadly and use textual evidence to build a response to that question.
- You may connect a passage to a discussion we have had in the classroom, or one you have had elsewhere.
- You may express confusion, disgust, or delight at a reading, particularly if you can contextualize these responses in analysis. It's typically preferable to write about *why* something gave you a particular feeling than simply stating the nature of your reaction. Think of the journal as a place for

response, which can sit at the intersection of feeling and analysis. Why did x passage strike you as beautiful or as horrible? What was moving about it, and how is your feeling about the passage linked to course themes?

- You may express broad questions you have throughout the course of the semester, and you may link these questions to particular readings.
- You may connect elements of that day's reading to readings from earlier in the semester, or reading you're doing in other contexts.
- You may lay the groundwork for an essay idea and take the opportunity to discuss it with your classmates on Slack.
- The list doesn't actually end here. Use the journal as a space for writerly exploration, as long as you feel you're delivering unique critical engagement with the assigned texts!

Grading of journals: Each journal entry is graded on a 10-point scale. Late posts will receive a maximum of 8 points.

___/4 points: You offer an interesting and original insight, observation, or line of inquiry

___/2 points: Your writing style is clear and communicative (it doesn't need to be *completely polished* or academic, though)

___/2 points: You reference specific aspects of the text, whether an event or a quotation (don't forget page #s)

___/2 points: You post your entry on time

11. Technology/devices policy:

You may bring tablets, laptops, phones, and all sorts of devices to class if they are instrumental to your learning experience. I encourage you to analyze your own practices for ideal learning, and I trust you to make the right decision for yourself about whether a laptop will be an aid or a hindrance to your level of engagement, comfort, and comprehension in the class. Make sure to think carefully about your own learning gains, and only use devices in ways that support your learning process.

Laptops and other devices can be distracting to you and to other students, so it is important that you use your devices *only* for essential learning purposes. Distracted web browsing, googling, checking social media, checking email, and other means of distraction are not permitted in class. If you are using your device in a way that is distracting to yourself or your classmates, you will need to reevaluate your use of devices in class in a meeting with Professor Silverblank.

Animals & Androids Course Calendar

W	Date	Topics/Activities	Reading(s)	Assignments
1	Tu 9/3	Introduction	n/a	n/a
	Th 9/5	Animal intelligence & animal morality	Safina; Aesop	Journal response
	Sat., 9/7 Optional Extra credit opportunity (PACC project)	Bryn Mawr Days - Meet the folks at AWB 9am-2pm 7 Bryn Mawr Ave, Bryn Mawr PA 19010 11:45am Melodies Performance	-	-
2	Tu 9/10	Heroes, animals, and monsters	Homer's Odyssey 4, 9	
	Th 9/11	Magic & metamorphosis	Homer's Odyssey 10	Journal response due
3	Tu 9/17	Odysseus, Circe, and her enchanted animals 1:00-1:30 30-minute introduction to AWB & sensory workshop with Christine Rouse, Founder and Director, AWB	Plutarch's 'Beasts are Rational'	
	Th 9/19	Animal utopias	Aristophanes' Birds, pp. 17- 59	Journal response
4	Tu 9/24	In-class: artist's talk and Q&A with Wit López (PACC artist)	No reading due	
	Th 9/26	Cloud-cuckoo-land	Aristophanes' Birds, pp. 59- 96	Journal response due

	Sun 9/29	AWB Workshop 12pm-4pm		
5	Tu 10/1	Animals & the arts of magic	Apuleius' Metamorphoses 1-2	
	W 10/2 Optional extra credit opportunity	Classics Marathon: a staged reading of Aristophanes' Birds 7:30pm. Presentation Lounge, VCAM		To participate, email Prof. Roberts (droberts@haverford.edu)
	Th 10/3	Research session & project planning - visit from library (HS away @ ALSCW conference)	Apuleius' Met. 3, 4, 5	NOTE: NO JOURNAL DUE
6	Tu 10/8	Beasts of burden	Apuleius' Met. 6-7	
	Th 10/10	The end of Lucius' meandering tail	Met. 10-11	Journal response
Break	10/11-10/20			
	Sun 10/13 (optional - for those around during Fall Break)	AWB Senior show: Peter and the Starcatcher performance, 4pm, Haverford School		
7	Tu 10/22	A hero, a cyclops, and a bunch of raunchy satyrs walk into a cave	Euripides' Cyclops	
	Th 10/24	Humanity	Ovid's Metamorphoses Book 1	Journal response
	Sun 10/27 (optional)	AWB's 15 th Year Celebration 12pm – 4pm at 3501 Goshen Rd, Newtown Square, PA 19073		

8	Tu 10/29	Metempsychosis & the ethics of eating animals	Ovid's Metamorphoses Book 15 (excerpt) Plutarch, 'On the Eating of Flesh'	
	Th 10/31	Bees & collectives	Virgil's Georgics, Book IV	Journal response
	Sun 11/3	AWB Workshop 10am – 4pm		
9	Tu 11/5	Hephaestean cyborgs & other creations	Hephaestus: Homer's Iliad 18, Odyssey 8, Homeric Hymn to Hephaestus	
	Th 11/7	Divine devices	-A. Mayor, "Hephaestus: Divine Devices and Automata", Gods and Robots, pp. 129-55. Princeton. -Selections from Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica	Journal response
10	Tu 11/12	Cyborg theory	Donna Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto"	
	Th 11/14	Cyborg theory and disability studies	Jillian Weise, "Common Cyborg" Alison Kafer, "The Cyborg and the Crip"	Journal response
11	Tu 11/19	Opening Pandora's jar?	Pandora: Hesiod's Theogony & a passage from Hesiod's Works and Days	
	Th 11/21	Artifice and artificers: Daedalus, Pygmalion, & Orpheus	Ovid's Metamorphoses Book 3 (selection), Book 10, Book 11 (selection)	Journal response

12	Tu 11/26	Made, not born	-A. Mayor, "Pygmalion's Living Doll and Prometheus' First Humans" -Ridley Scott's Prometheus	
	Th 11/28	No class (Thanksgiving)	-	-
13	Tu 12/3	Icarus reborn	-Johanna Hedva, <i>On Hell</i>	
	Th 12/5	...Icarus reborn	-Johanna Hedva, <i>On Hell</i>	Journal
14	Tu 12/10	Born or made?	Ridley Scott's Bladerunner; Short clip from Jason and the Argonauts	
	Th 12/12	Recognizing other life forms & universal design	-Star Trek: The Next Generation. S1E17: "Home Soil" -Star Trek: Deep Space Nine S2E6: "Melora" -Star Trek: Discovery. S2E4: "An Obol for Charon"	Journal