

Animal Rights Academy

Free University lecture series

Jan. 10– June 27, 2013

(6 months)

24 weeks of films and lectures
and discussion in review

Goals of this course/film, lecture series

- To provide an opportunity for sustained reflection on AR issues
- To remedy the absence of a course on AR philosophy in Toronto
- To provide free education to the public
- To encourage independent rational thought on controversial issues
- To strengthen and broaden the local AR community
- To provide an opportunity for local thinkers to disseminate their views

Films shown

- The Witness (must see, Youtube)
- Peaceable Kingdom (must see)
- Earthlings (must see)
- The Call of Life (must see)
- The Plague Dogs (animation, fiction, Youtube)
- Ikiru (by Kurosawae, fiction)
- Fantastic Planet (animation, fiction, Youtube)
- The Superior Human (must see, Youtube)
- Distrinct 9 (fiction)

- I Am an Animal (about PETA, Youtube)
- Project Nim
- A Delicate Balance: Deep Trouble (fish)
- The Rise of the Planet of the Apes (fiction)
- Maximum Tolerated Dose (must see)
- Cat City (feral cats)
- Behind the Mask (must see)
- The Mad Cowboy, (must see, Youtube)
- Cave of Forgotten Dreams

- Star Trek Voyager episode: Scientific Method
- River of Waste (environment, Youtube)
- Our Daily Bread (factory farm documentary, Youtube)
- Vegucated (must see)
- Bold Native (fiction, Youtube)
- The Meatrix (short animation, Youtube)
- The Stork is a Bird of War (short animation, Youtube)

Films we did not see but should have

- The Skin Trade (fur trade)
- Lolita (about marine mammal captivity)
- Moon Bear (Animals Asia)
- The Ghosts in Our Machine (just came out)
- The Animals Film (similar to Earthlings, Youtube)
- Speciesism (not out yet)
- Animals are not ours to eat (Peta)

Films we did not see (cont'd)

- How I Became an Elephant
- Green: the Movie (online)
- Sharkwater
- The Cove
- selected short videos on the theme of non-violence (e.g. Martin Luther King Jr., Homes Not Bombs, School of the Americas, etc)
- Selected AR animations

AR films I am not sure of, but are perhaps worth checking out

- Fowl Play (chickens)
- Unnecessary Fuss (vivisection)
- A Voice for the Voiceless
- Battle of the Beasts (early slaughterhouse film)
- Pig Farms: an Animal Equality documentary
- Modern Meat
- A Cow at My Table
- Pig Business
- Shelter Dogs
- No Country for Animals
- Killer of Sheep

Lectures in January

Philosopher David Sztybel covered several major areas:

- Rights theory,
- Utilitarianism
- Virtue ethics
- The feminist ethic of care
- Internal criticism of animal rights theories
- Ethical arguments against animal rights and responses

Philosophy doctoral candidate Dan Hooley

contributed two lectures:

- Comparison of the ethical theories of Peter Singer and Tom Regan
- Overview of the influential book *Zoopolis*

Also: Kant and animal rights, by Paul York (see lecture notes)

Lectures in February

- The paradox of human relations with animals, by Erika Ritter. Erika summarized arguments in her book The Dog by the Cradle, The Serpent Beneath: Some Paradoxes of Human-Animal Relationships.
- The environment, environmental fascism, and animal rights, by Paul York (see lecture notes)
- Ahimsa as an ethical foundation for animal rights, by David Stzybel [David's "best care" theory]
- Carol Adams' theory of the absent referent, by Carrie Proctor
- Comparisons with racism and human slavery, by Paul York [see powerpoint]

Lectures in March

- Effective activism, by Rob Laidlaw (of Zoopolis)
- **Animals and the law, by Prof. Leslie Bisgould**
- The ethics of welfarism / incrementalism, by David Sztybel
- **Judaism and animal rights, by Laura Myers**
- Christianity and animal rights, by Paul York

Lectures in April

- Star Trek and animal rights ethics, by Paul York
[see powerpoint]
- **Atheism, Darwinism, and AR, by Paul York**
- Comparisons with the Holocaust, by David Sztybel
- **The use of human psychology in animal rights campaigning, by Prof. Lisa Kramer**
- Tolsoy, Gandhi, and bearing witness, by Anita Krajnc

Lectures in May

- History of AR: the Work of Canadian Animal Advocates in the 1970's and 1980's, by Ian Purdy and Jade Wallace. Guest: Liz White of Animal Alliance
- **Animals and the law, by Nick Wright of Animal Justice**
- Compassionate education, by Rachel York-Bridgers
- **Animal rights and literature, by Alyson Fortowsky**
- Vivisection. The ethics, by David Szttybel; overview of vivisection at University of Toronto, by Paul York
- The use of animals in education, by Tracey Hamilton
- **Also: Albert Schweitzer, Francione, Freud, Bekoff, and Grey Owl**

Lectures in June

- “Strategic advocacy” (Melanie Joy and Nick Cooney’s work), by Ariel Levitsky
- Buddhism and AR, by Theadore Tsaouskis and Sean Michael Smith.
- Comparing ablesim and speciesism, by Mary Fantaske
- Controversial topics in animal rights, by Paul York
- Panel discussion on raising vegan children and homeschooling them, led by Kelli Possilini
- AR and bell hook’s love ethic, concluding inspirational words, by Samita Nandy

Lectures we did not get to for lack of time

- Compassionate education (in greater detail)
- Animal ethology in depth
- More in-depth examination of rights theory, feminist theory, and AR ethics in general
- Utilization of the debate format for controversial topics, with each topic receiving an entire class
- Emerging directions in animal rights thinking (though we did cover Zoopolis , interlocking oppression, and religion and AR)
- The ethics of the impending apocalypse: climate change, pandemics, mass extinction, etc. How do we response to these crises?
- Ethical consumerism and merging with other ethical movements for social change.

What now?

- The website is a resource. We will continue to add to it. You can help by sharing it widely.
- Volunteers to add captions to some videos, and compile all FB comments for posterity?
- Will this be offered again? Possible, but not certain at this point. There is some interest by others in continuing Animal Rights Academy.
- Note that the cost for this was \$0 because of the volunteers and because the rooms were booked through the U of T Animal Rights club

Mistakes, regrets

- The course reader was hard to maintain so skip it
- Few people showed for films, so skip film showings (or change to evenings)
- With debatable topics arrange formal debates (e.g. welfarism, the environment, tactics, etc.)
- We did not have enough time to cover everything (esp. controversial topics), and did not manage record the audience discussion (if we do this again, we need a portable mic.)
- Need to videotape discussions too
- Needed to advertise this more widely; would need a volunteer team to do this in future

The imperative of compassionate education

- This is what education should be: compassionate, practical, focused on issues that really matter.
- AR should be dynamic and critical, engaging our minds and inspiring our sense of civic duty.
- Reflection and action go together. (Reflect with action changes nothing; action without reflection can lack depth and vision)
- Respect for animals “is the way of a whole person” (Abraham Lincoln)
- *Ultimate concern* engages the whole person: mind, body, spirit (Paul Tillich)

Thanks

- David Sztybel -- several lectures, support
- Jayme Dunlap -- podcasts
- Michael Sizer -- videos
- Sweta – website
- All the lecturers
- Also, additional support: Valerie deGrandis, Paul Jenkins, Agnes, Michael L., Dawn, Ian

Final thoughts

- This was a success, and I hope it may serve as a model for others to follow in other cities, or in Toronto in the future
- Thank you to those who attended for the last six months, and brought up the level of discussion with your knowledge and passion.
- Without the regular attendees it would not have happened, so thank you.