



**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2019-20**

**Philosophy 3991F: Nonhuman Minds and Human Morals:
Animals, Bacteria, and Plants**

Fall 2019

**Tuesday 2:30-3:30, Thursday 2:30-4:30
P&AB 117**

Instructor: Vicente Raja

Office Number: WIRB 7134

E-mail: vgalian@uwo.ca

DESCRIPTION

Does your dog remember where you hide her ball? Does your cat love you? Do sunflowers know the position of the sun? Many nonhuman animals, bacteria, and plants behave in very complex ways and maybe some of them deserve to be labeled as “intelligent” or “cognitive”. In this course we will consider different philosophical and scientific approaches to the mental attributes of nonhuman organisms and some ethical debates that fall out of them. Animal minds have been a matter of discussion since Ancient Philosophy and Darwin himself, for example, was defending the attribution of some intelligent capacities to plants already in the 19th century. During the 20th century, these ideas have developed across the sciences of the mind and some of them have informed debates regarding the way to treat nonhuman animals, their moral status, etc. This course will address these and other issues by first considering some traditional questions regarding nonhuman minds before turning to a consideration of some of the contemporary debates regarding the mental capacities of nonhuman organisms—e.g., tool use, conceptualization, language—in the cognitive sciences. Then, the ethical debates that emerge from these issues will be addressed.

TEXTS

A combination of philosophical and scientific (i.e., methodological, research, and review papers/chapters) articles extracted from philosophical and scientific journals, books, textbooks, and anthologies will be made available to students as PDF files on OWL.

OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will have a general understanding of the philosophical and scientific study of nonhuman minds approached from both historical and systematic perspectives. They will have gained foundational knowledge in cognitive science and its philosophy, cognitive ethology, and plant science along with familiarity with different methods and experimental paradigms for the study of nonhuman minds. As an advanced undergraduate course, students will also have gained fundamental training in reading and interpreting seminal works in general history and philosophy of science, philosophy of psychology, philosophy of cognitive science, philosophy of neuroscience, as well as the skills requisite to critically evaluate this work and formulate and defend their own arguments on topics that interest them.

REQUIREMENTS

Regular Attendance and Participation	20%
4 Online quizzes	20% (5% each)
Midterm Paper	25%
Final Paper	35%

Online Quizzes — Quizzes will have between 5 and 6 questions that may be either multiple-choice or short-answer questions. Students are expected to answer each quiz during the week it is assigned. Answering a quiz after the week it is assigned will be considered as late work.

Midterm Paper (1000 words circa.) — Students are expected to write a historical paper in which they analyze one historical proposal on animal cognition. The paper should sketch the principles and main arguments of the selected proposal. This paper is due by Week 7. Submitting the paper after Week 7 will be considered as late work.

Final Paper (3000 words) — Students are expected to write an argumentative paper concerning one position addressed along the course. It is expected that the student claims against the selected position. The paper should have four parts: (i) a short introduction where the main thesis defended by the student is clearly stated, (ii) an explanatory section in which the argument faced is analyzed, (iii) a discussion section in which the student defends and arguments in favor of her thesis, and (iv) a conclusion summing up the results of the argumentation. This paper is due last week. Submitting the paper after last week will be considered as late work.

* Everyone is welcomed and encouraged to contact the instructor for help with any of the assignments.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy Policies which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances: http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

LATE WORK

Work turned in late without academic accommodation will have 5% of the final score deducted for each day it is late. Missed quizzes without academic accommodation will receive a zero.

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change with sufficient notice)

TBA