GSWS 318-4: SPECIAL TOPICS: “MAN’S BEST FRIEND?”: FEMINISMS ENGAGING WITH NONHUMANS

Professor: Dr. Rebecca Scott Yoshizawa
Email: rebecca_yoshizawa@sfu.ca
Office: TBA
Office hours: TBA
Lecture: Mondays 9:30 – 13:20; HC 1415

Course Description:
Feminists are increasingly examining how the power structures that produce unjust oppressions for women and other marginalized Others extend to the nonhuman world. This course explores how feminists have theorized, advocated for, and fostered relations with nonhumans, including animals, organic and inorganic matter, machines, and cyborgs. Informed by feminist ethics, science studies, and philosophy, we ask: How do understandings of animals relate to conceptualizations of sex and gender? Are there feminist obligations to animals, plants, bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protists? How does feminism inform and support animal and ecological advocacy? Can nonhumans teach us about ethics, care, and equality? Specific topics include evolutionary biology, environmentalism, cyborgs, artificial intelligence, animal research ethics, microbes, ‘gut feminism,’ and homo- and trans-sexuality in animals. Recognizing the timely and controversial nature of these topics as well as the role of GSWS in transforming students into critical advocates for change, assignments encourage engagement in public dialogues on human/nonhuman relationships.

Educational Goals:
At the end of this course, students will be able to:
1. Critically analyze popular, scientific, and feminist constructions of gender, sexuality, species, and nonhuman matter
2. Engage in important public debates regarding gender, sexuality, species difference, environmentalism, and artificial intelligence
3. Reflect upon their own assumptions regarding sex, gender, and human/nonhuman difference vis-à-vis feminist perspectives

Course Texts and Courseware:
Readings will be on Canvas

Prerequisite: 30 units, including 3 units in GSWS or WS or GDST.
Course Evaluation and Assignments:

- **15% Participation and attendance**
- **25% Opinion editorial; due week 4**
  Write a ~1200 word opinion-editorial about a contemporary ecological or animal rights issue from feminist perspectives learned in the course
- **25% Film review of Gorillas in the Mist OR Dawn of the Planet of the Apes; due week 8**
  Write a ~1200 word film review critically appraising issues of human/nonhuman relations addressed in the film from feminist perspectives learned in the course
- **35% Group Advocacy Proposal; due weeks 12 and 13**
  In groups of 3-4, select a contemporary issue in human/nonhuman relations and develop a 15-20 page program of advocacy describing the problem, your position, and your feminist solutions. Your program of advocacy could include interventions, policy changes, program creations, lobbying for legislation, guerilla activism, or public relations campaigns. Give a 30-minute presentation of your advocacy proposal in week 12 or 13.