Animals in Islamic Tradition
ARA4930/ 04EF
Spring 2017

Class information:

Instructor: Dr Sarra Tlili
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Office Hours: Thursday 10 -12
Class Periods: T. 8-9 R 9
Classroom: MAT 0113

Course description:

This course is situated at the intersection of literary, cultural, religious, and animal studies. It explores animal themes in Islamic texts using theoretical tools from the rapidly growing field of Animal Studies. Through a close reading of a selection of texts, we will examine the ways Muslims conceived of and interacted with nonhuman species and consider the factors that have shaped their attitudes and behaviors in this respect. We will investigate themes such as the status of nonhuman animals, the ways the tradition allowed Muslims to benefit from and required them to attend to the needs of certain species, and the ways Muslims' attitudes toward nonhuman animals changed over time. The course will also provide a forum where we rethink and reevaluate our own cultural and ethical relationships with animals. Finally, the course seeks to acquaint students with a few Arabic literary masterpieces and help them to become closer and better readers of literary texts.

Required Course Materials (For Online sources follow this link):

https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/ares.dll?Action=6&Type=60&Form=60&Value=15960

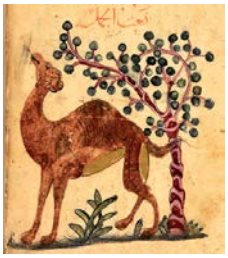
- Ibrahim al-Kuni, *The Bleeding of the Stone*. Interlink, 2002
- Richard Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2006.
- The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, T*he Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*. Translated by Lenn Goodman and Richard McGregor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 (online)
- Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014 (online)
- Housni Shehada Alkhateeb, *Mamluks and Animals: Veterinary Medicine in Medieval Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 2012 (online)

The following book is available online through UF library:

- Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012 (online: http://lib.myilibrary.com/Open.aspx?id=383461)

Course Structure:

The course is structured around a number of primary texts supplemented by secondary readings and class presentations. The first section explores **animals' status** in Islamic tradition through a close study of the medieval fable, *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn.* In this section students will be assigned a number of presentations whereby they further explore certain themes of the fable.



The second section explores the **concrete dimension** of human-nonhuman animal relations, particularly the ways Muslims interacted with nonhuman animals and the ethical and legal rules that regulate such interactions.

The last section deals with two specific themes, **animal companionship** and **vegetarianism**.

Writing assignments:

To help you navigate the readings you will be assigned a set of questions pertaining to each reading assignment. Answers to each set of questions should range between one to two pages. Although these writing assignments will not be graded on a regular basis, I still expect you to turn them in before coming to class (on Canvas). These questions will also serve to launch our class discussions. Answering them carefully will help you to be more engaged in our class activities. This activity will count toward your class participation grade.

Presentations:

There are two types of presentations: shorter ones with the aim of exploring aspects of our thematic units and complementing our readings, and longer ones at the end of the semester. The first type will count toward your class participation grade; the second will be graded separately. The aim of the end-of-the-year presentations is to allow you to research a course-related theme of your choice and share the results with your classmates. Students must discuss their presentation topics with me no later than the eighth week of the semester.

Attendance

You are allowed three fifty-minute session absences (equivalent of one week). Beyond this, any unexcused absence will cause your course grade to drop by one scale (example: if your grade for the course is A, with one unexcused absence it becomes A-, if it is A- it becomes B+). If you miss class for a valid reason you have to bring in a supporting document (for example: a doctor's note). If you plan to miss class to observe a religious holiday, make sure to notify me beforehand. Please note: once you have used up your three complimentary absences, you will not be allowed additional ones, regardless of what excuses you may give me. Note also that three late arrivals (five or more minutes after class begins) count as one absence.

Tests and Quizzes:

There will be one midterm, one final exam, and several pop quizzes. For pop quizzes you are allowed to consult your notes, but not the assigned readings.

Grading:

Midterm: 20%
Final: 20%
Presentation: 15%
Quizzes: 15%
Class participation. 30 %

Grade distribution

93-100	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	LESS THAN 60	E

General administrative issues

A C- grade will not be sufficient for Majors or Minors or count towards a GE or Gordon Rule Credit or College Basic Distribution Credit. See UF website on grading policy: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Canvas

All assignments, announcements, exercises, study guides, grades, etc. will be posted on the course website on Canvas. It is your responsibility to check the website regularly and keep up to date with the class.

Cell Phones and other electronic devices:

Students are expected to turn off - or put on silent - and put away all cell phones during class sessions.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Violations of the honor code include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, bribery, misrepresentation, fabrication, and conspiracy. Such violations may result in the following: lowering of grades, mandatory 0 on assignments, redoing assignments, a final failing grade in the course, expulsion from the course, referral to the student-run Honor Court. The Honor Code states: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment. For more information, refer to: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/Academic_Honesty.html

Students with Special Needs

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. More information can be found at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Letters of recommendation:

If you wish me to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf, before you approach me with a request, please make sure that:

- You will earn / have earned at least B+ in all classes you had with me.
- You had regular attendance.
- You did all required work, including ungraded work.
- You never behaved in a disrespectful way - tacitly or otherwise - with me or your classmates.

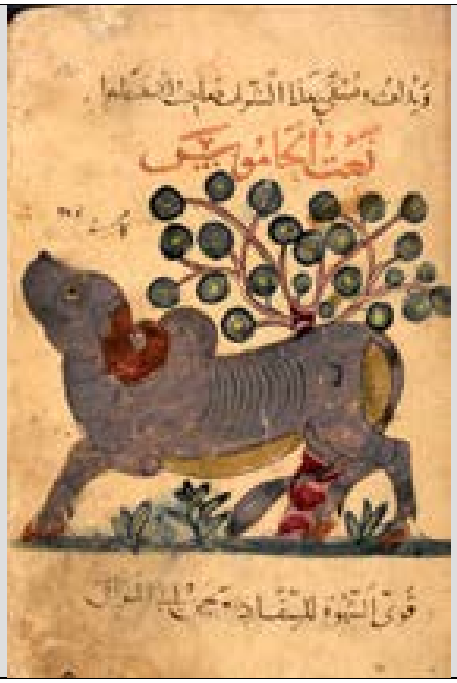
Final Points:

- When you email me through Canvas, please make sure to check the box that says "Send a copy of this message to recipients' email address(es)". If you don't it may take me several days before I realize that you have emailed me.
- When you email me allow 24 hours to receive a reply.
- I look forward to an exciting and fulfilling semester!

Tentative Course Outline:

	Readings	activities
Week 1	**Introduction**	
Thursday, Jan. 5th	• Introducing the syllabus • Sources of Islamic knowledge about animals	
Week 2	**Status of Animals/ *The Case of the Animals versus Man***	
Tuesday, Jan. 10th	• *The Case of the Animals*, Prologue (63-98)	**Presentations**: • Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (Useful source: Godefroid de Callataÿ, *Ikhwān al-*

		*Safa'. A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2005). • The Great Chain of Being (Useful source: Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). **Writing:** • How frequently do the Ikhwān use status-related terms (e.g. Lower, higher, more/less perfect, serve, is served by)? What does this tell us about their worldview? • Describe the Ikhwān's cosmic and body hierarchies.
Thursday, Jan. 12th	• *The Case of the Animals*, Chapters. 1-5 (99-121)  	**Presentations**: • Compare and contrast the Qur'anic concepts of *taskhīr* and *tadhlīl*, the biblical concept of dominion, and the notion of domestication. **Writing:** • How do humans corroborate their claim that animals are their slaves? • How do nonhuman animals counter humans' arguments?
Week 3		
Tuesday, Jan. 17th	• *The Case of the Animals*, Chapters. 6-10 (122-150)	**Presentation**: • Animals in Hinduism (Useful source on Canvas) • Animals in Jainism and Buddhism (Useful source on Canvas) • The notion of *khalīfa* (Useful source on Canvas) **Writing assignment:** • Compare and contrast the creation narrative in the Qur'an, the Bible, and the Ikhwān's fable. • How do the Ikhwān perceive humans' role in relation to God (in reference to the word "*khalīfa*," referred to here as vice-gerent).

Thursday, Jan. 19th	• *The Case of the Animals*, chapters. 11-18 (150-198). • Asani, "Oh That I Could be a Bird and Fly, I Would Rush to the Beloved: Birds in Islamic Mystical Poetry" (Canvas) 	**Presentation:** • Animals in Judaism, (Useful source on Canvas) • Animals in Christianity (Useful source on Canvas) **Writing assignment:** • How do the Ikhwān categorize their animals? What do you think of this categorization? • Describe animals' self-perception. • Can you detect biases against nonhuman animals in this section? • How did dogs become attached to humans? • How would you describe the Ikhwān's position toward birds? How would you defend your view? • Compare the Ikhwān's views of insects in this section to the one in the prologue.
Week 4		
Tuesday, Jan. 24th	• *The Case of the Animals*, chapters. 19-26 (pp. 199-242) **Watch in class:** The Last Lions https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnPcudPn1xk 	**Presentations**: • Animals as signs of creation (Useful source on Canvas) **Writing assignment:** • Compare the hierarchical system described in chapter 19, p. 201 to the one described in the prologue. • How does the "hard-headed" jinni correct humans' self-perceptions? • Describe the Ikhwān's characterization, particularly how they present their human protagonists. • How do find the Ikhwān's state of knowledge about non-human animals? • How do the Ikhwān justify the fact that nonhuman animals, in spite of their great diversity, need only a few kings whereas humans, despite their small number, need many

		kings? What does this tell us about the Ikhwān's worldview? • What's the Ikhwān's conception of the ideal world?
Thursday, Jan. 26th	• *The Case of the Animals*, chapter 27 (242-247). **Watch in class:** • clip from the 2006 National Geographic documentary film *Eye of the Leopard*, narrated by Jeremy Irons (clip shows how a leopard adopts a baboon): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQUhhA9ApF4	**Writing**: • How do animals refute the rationality argument? How sincere are the Ikhwān are about this refutation? How do we know?
Week 5		
Tuesday, Jan. 31st	• *The Case of the Animals*, chapters 28-42 	**Presentations**: • Concept of *tafdīl* in the Qur'an (Useful Source: Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an*) **Writing**: • Enumerate the arguments that humans adduce in this section to support their claim of superiority and animals' refutation of these arguments. • How do humans win the case? What is your reaction to this end?

Treatment of Animals: ethical, Legal and social dimensions		
Thursday, Feb. 2nd	• Ashraf Ali Thanvi, "Animal Rights in Islam"	**Writing**: • What are the "rights" that "Islam" extends to animals? • Based on Thanvi's piece, how would assess Islam's attitude toward animals? • Some modern philosophers, such as Peter Singer, find the phrase "animal rights" problematic. In your view, why would that be so?
Week 6		
Tuesday, Feb. 7th	• Foltz, Chap. 1 • Shehada, chap. 1 (divided among several students): ▪ Farm and Pack Animals: 19-24 ▪ Hunting, Perceptions of the Hunt: 30-36 ▪ Hunting, Hunting Methods: 36-37 ▪ Hunting, Hunting Grounds and their Perils: 41-43 ▪ Hunting, Animals that Participated in the Hunt: 43-50 ▪ The Ḥajj Caravan, 55-59 ▪ Animals in the Postal Service, Post Horses: 59-63 ▪ Animals in the Postal Service, Postal Pigeons: 63-67	**Presentations:** • Describe and assess the use of animals in your reading section. **Writing:** • In *The Case of the Animals*, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ present humans' use of other animals as a form of slavery and a sign of exploitation. Based on today's readings, to what extent would you agree with these authors' view? • Foltz notes that the Qur'an occasionally blurs the line between human and non-human animals and views this as something denoting negative views about nonhuman animals. Explain his view point and consider if blurring the line can also denote positive attitudes toward animals.
Thursday, Feb. 9th	• Foltz, chap. 2	**Writing:** • What makes the mainstream Islamic legal tradition more animal-friendly than the legal systems of the contemporary West in Foltz's view?

		• Why does Islamic tradition still fall short of satisfying the expectations of modern animal rights advocates?
Week 7		
Tuesday, Feb. 14th	• Tlili, "Muhammad" • Tlili, "Animals would Follow Shāfi?ism" **Watch in class**: Documentary on ants.	**Writing:** • Which animals did Muhammad allow Muslims to kill? What does this tell us about his general attitude toward nonhuman animals. • Would you agree that Muhammad felt closer to nonhuman animals than he did to human beings? Why/why not? • Why would animals follow Shāfi?ism? What other traditions would they follow? Why?
Thursday, Feb. 16th	• Foltz, chap. 5 	**Writing:** • How would you describe contemporary Muslims' attitudes toward animals? • Which contemporary Muslim thinkers appear more tuned toward the wellbeing of animals? What makes them so?
Week 8		
Tuesday, Feb. 21st	• Mikhail, chaps 1& 2	**Writing**: • What are the economic and social functions of animals in premodern Egypt (prior to the second half of the 18th century)?

		• Would you consider the treatment of slaves and concubines as animals demeaning to slaves and more generally to humans? Why/why not? • What are the **two** main factors that triggered profound changes in the role and centrality of animals in Ottoman Egypt's economic and social life? • How did political corruption exacerbate these conditions? • Describe the process through which animal-centered economy shifted to human-centered economy. • How did the extinguishment of animal energy fundamentally reconfigure Ottoman Egypt.
Thursday, Feb. 23rd	• Taneja, "saintly Animals" • Tlili, "Animals in Sufism"	
Week 9		
Tuesday, Feb. 28th	MIDTERM	
COMPANION ANIMALS: STATUS, TREATMENT, AND CULTURAL ATTITUDES		
Thursday, March 2nd	• Fariq, "An Abbasid Secretary-Poet Who Was Interested in Animals"	**Writing**: • What information do we obtain from this article about the poet and his time? • Are there any signs of anthropomorphism in the "Goat" poem? • How is the cat described in the "cat" poem"? • What do we learn about the presence of undesirable animals in

		pre-modern societies from the "Ants, Mice, and Birds" poem? What does this tell us about the balance of power between humans and nonhumans in this society? • How strong are the poet's feelings toward the "Shah-mard" bird? Which qualities are admired in this bird? • How does the function of the dove differ from the functions of other animals mourned in the set of poems discussed in this article?
Week 10	SPRING BREAK	
Week 11		
Tuesday, March 14th	• Fotlz, chap. 7 • Menache, • Abou El Fadl, "Dogs in the Islamic Tradition and Nature" http://www.scholarofthehouse.org/dinistrandna.html 	**Watch:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFzbBVMR8zA **Writing**: • To what extent are Foltz's and Menache's criticisms of monotheists' attitudes toward dogs shaped by both author's own cultural backgrounds and worldviews? • How does Abou El Fadl seek to absolve Islamic tradition from blame of negative attitudes toward dogs?
Thursday, March 16th	• Shehada, "Companion Animals, Songbirds, and Stray Cats" • *The Superiority of Dogs*.	**Writing**: • Shehada: What is your assessment of the act of releasing birds? • *The Superiority of Dogs:* To what extent would you consider this book a defense of dogs? • Which anecdotes show the actual merit of dogs? What makes them so?
Week 12		

Tuesday, March 21st	• Ritvo, "The Emergence of Modern Pet-Keeping" • Heidi J Nast, "Critical Ped Studies?"	**Writing**: • Historically, what role has social class played in pet-keeping? • Why did the widespread pet-keeping among the middle class only appear in the last two hundred years? • How is human preoccupation with the domination of nature reflected in practices related to pets during this period?
Thursday, March 23rd	• Qur'an and Ḥadīth material on cats and dogs. • Ibn Qudama, al-Nuwawi, excerpts on animals.	**Writing:** • The Qur'anic narrative of the companion of the cave is often cited as reflecting a uniquely positive attitude toward dogs. What element in this narrative could have led to this conclusion?
Week 13		
Tuesday, March 28th	• Mikhail, chaps. 3 & 4 • Early modern pieces on dogs in the Muslim world: ▪ Constantinople, pp. 227-30. ▪ Lane, 284-7 ▪ Martin	**Writing**: • How does Mikhail's presentation of Muslims' attitudes toward dogs differ from that of Foltz? • In your view, what accounts for this difference?
Thursday, March 30th	• Ḥaqqī, "Antar and Juliette" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wo_nvu5zDc	Writing: • Is it better to be Antar or Juliette?
VEGETARIANISM		
Week 14		
Tuesday, April 4th	• Foltz, chap. 6 • *The Bleeding of the Stone*, chaps 1-14	
Thursday, April 6th	• *The bleeding of the stone*, chaps. 15-end	
Week 15		
Tuesday, April 11th	End-of-semester presentations	

Thursday, April 13th	End-of-semester presentations	
Week 16		
Tuesday, April 18th	FINAL EXAM	