

HUMANS AND THEIR PREDATORS CMLT 21984 (Spring 2021)

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:40-4:00PM

Zoom:

The Zoom will begin 10 minutes earlier than the scheduled class time; feel free to drop in early to chat with me or with one another.

Instructor: Sam Lasman

slasman@uchicago.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1-3 PM, *on Zoom*

<https://uchicago.zoom.us/j/93917864299?pwd=YTZodVAyRzRScms0Q1V4Y2V6REJ3dz09>

Sign-ups via Google Docs: <https://bit.ly/2OViy8j>

Alternate times may be available by email appointment.

Clicking the link will put you in a waiting room; I will admit you according to the order on the Google Doc. You are welcome to drop by without signing up, but I'll give precedence to those who have. See also **Office Hours** under GRADING, below.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Animals that sometimes prey on humans occupy critical niches in individual imaginations, global culture, and natural ecosystems. While our interactions with these creatures have shifted drastically over the millennia, only recently—thanks to factors such as ecological collapse and urbanization—has the majority of the world's population come to live without the threat of predation. This class draws on a variety of disciplines to interrogate relationships between people and the mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish that sometimes eat us. We will read epic literature from the Middle East and Europe; examine news reports from 18th-century France and 21st-century Florida; explore the colonial and postcolonial dimensions of big cat hunting in India and Kenya; and navigate ways in which ecology, paleontology, and other scientific disciplines can inform humanistic inquiry.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- explore and synthesize sources from a variety of disciplines to analyze the relationships between humans and our predators
- evaluate the role of culture in defining human interactions with nature
- practice engagement with peers through productive academic discussion
- generate substantive work that engages with course themes

COURSE TEXTS

All course materials will be made available through Canvas and/or through the University of Chicago Library system.

GRADING & REQUIREMENTS

5% Office Hours

Students are required to attend office hours at least once over the course of the quarter. More visits are encouraged, and can be figured into the Participation grade.

50% Final Project

Students will complete a final project that explores an account of predatory encounter between a human or humans and another creature or creatures. The project may be analytical or creative in nature; however, it must demonstrate engagement with at least two disciplines or critical perspectives (i.e., animal studies; historical study; ecology; paleontology; literary criticism; folkloristics; etc.).

At midterm, students will submit a 2-3 page project proposal. This will be graded on a pass/fail basis for 10% of the total course grade.

The final project should be roughly 9-10 pages (if it takes written form; other formats may be proposed). This will be graded on an A-F scale for 40% of the total course grade.

Page counts are for double-spaced, Times New Roman, size 12. Assignments should be submitted through Canvas or email.

30% Participation

Students are expected to attend and actively engage in class sessions. Active engagement can include asking questions, offering thoughts, and participating in small-group discussions. That said, there are other modes of participation. I am happy to discuss accommodations and alternate arrangements. I will be in touch with any student in danger of not receiving full participation credit by the end of Week 7, so that there is plenty of time to find a solution.

15% Presentations

Once per quarter, each student will present on a relevant source. This may be an article, poem, short video, painting, etc.. It should relate to the particular reading for the day of the presentation. This relevance may be thematic; it may also be a related source by the same author(s), or even another relevant section from the same source, or article from the same collection.

Presentations should be roughly five to eight minutes. They may, but do not need to, include an audiovisual component or handout. Presentations will be followed by some time for questions and discussion; presenters may wish to bring in one or two pre-prepared questions for this segment. Presentations will be graded on their engagement with the source in question. A summary of the basic information as might be found in the introduction/abstract (or, ahem, Wikipedia) is unlikely to receive full credit.

CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

WEEK 1. Introductions & Theoretical Perspectives.

Tuesday, 3/30.

No Prior Reading.

Thursday, 4/1.

Val Plumwood, "Human Vulnerability and the Experience of Being Prey," *Quadrant* (March 1995).

Brett L. Walker, "Animals and the Intimacy of History," *History and Theory* (52.4, December 2013), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24542958>.

Krista Maglen, "An Alligator Got Betty: Dangerous Animals as Historical Agents," *Environment and History*, (24.2, 2018).

WEEK 2. Paleontology and Anthropology.**Tuesday, 4/6.**

Donna Hart and Robert W. Sussman, *Man the Hunted: Primates, Predators, and Human Evolution* (2009), 161-190 & 245-250. Access through UChicago Library.

Lee R. Berger, "Brief Communication: Predatory Bird Damage to the Taung Type-Skull of *Australopithecus africanus* Dart 1925," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* (131, 2006).

C. K. Brain, "New Finds at the Swartkrans Australopithecine Site," *Nature* (225, March 1970).

Noel T. Boaz & Russell L. Ciochon, "The Scavenging of "Peking Man"", *Natural History* (110.2, March 2001).

Adrian Treves & L. Naughton-Treves, "Risk and opportunity for humans coexisting with large carnivores," *Journal of Human Evolution* (36, 1999).

Thursday, 4/8. 67 pp.

Palmira Saladié and Antonio Rodríguez-Hidalgo, "Archaeological Evidence for Cannibalism in Prehistoric Western Europe: from Homo antecessor to the Bronze Age," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* (24.4, December 2017).

Donna Hart and Robert W. Sussman, *Man the Hunted: Primates, Predators, and Human Evolution* (2009), *Man the Hunted*, 265-268. Access through UChicago Library.

Carlos Fausto, "Feasting on People: Eating Animals and Humans in Amazonia," *Current Anthropology* (48.4, August 2007), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/518298>.

WEEK 3. Myth I: Epic and Religious Texts.**Tuesday, 4/13.**

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (1996).

Homer, *Odyssey*, Books IX, X, & XII (c. 700 BCE), trans. Ian Johnston (2019), <http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/homer/odysseytofc.html>.

Thursday, 4/15.

The Book of Jonah (c. 400 BCE), trans. JPS (1917), <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt1701.htm>.

Selection from *Beowulf* (c. 900 CE), trans. Seamus Heaney (2000), lines 64-851.

Selection from Abolqāsem Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeḥ* (1010 CE), trans. Sam Lasman (2021).

Selection from Hakim Irānshāh ebn-e Abi-l-Khayr, *Bahmannāmeḥ* (c. 1100), trans. Sam Lasman (2021).

Selection from Jacobus de Varagine, *The Golden Legend* (c. 1260 CE), trans. William Caxton & F. S. Ellis (1900), “The Life of St. Martha.”

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/GoldenLegend-Volume4.asp#Martha>.

WEEK 4. Myth II: Shapeshifters and Other Devourers.

Tuesday, 4/20.

“A most true Discourse, declaring the life and death of one Stubbe Peeter, being a most wicked Sorcerer” (1590), <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-damnably-life-and-death-of-stubbe-peeter-a-werewolf-1590> (transcription into modern font: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A13085.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=toc>).

Selection from Robert Darnton, “Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose,” from *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (1984).

Selections from Jay M. Smith, *Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast* (2011).

John F. Burns, “In India, Attacks by Wolves Spark Old Fears and Hatreds,” *The New York Times* (Sept. 1, 1996),

<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/09/01/world/in-india-attacks-by-wolves-spark-old-fears-and-hatreds.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

Thursday, 4/22.

Emma Kailikapuolono Metcalf Beckley Nakuina, “The Shark-Man, Nanaue” (1896), <https://www.sacred-texts.com/pac/hft/hft27.htm>.

Alice Werner, “The Amazimu,” “Of Were-Wolves, Halfmen, Gnomes, Goblins, and Other Monsters,” & “The Swallowing Monster,” from *Myths and Legends of the Bantu* (1933), [Myths and Legends of the Bantu Index \(sacred-texts.com\)](https://www.sacred-texts.com/pac/hft/hft27.htm).

“Chase of the Severed Head,” Cheyenne myth, from Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, ed., *American Indian Myths and Legends* (1984).

Yunkurra Billy Atkins, “Cannibal Story” (2016), <https://vimeo.com/138495954>.

WEEK 5. Featured Creature I: Tyger, Tyger.

Tuesday, 5/4.

William Blake, “The Tyger” (1794),

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43687/the-tyger>.

Colin Pedley, “Blake’s Tiger and the Discourse of Natural History,” *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* (Summer 1990), <http://bq.blakearchive.org/24.1.pedley>.

Blake Smith, “Robot of Jihad? A Guide to Tipu’s Tiger,” *The Appendix* (2.2, April 2014), <http://theappendix.net/issues/2014/4/robot-of-jihad-a-guide-to-tipus-tiger>,

Selection from Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (2005).

Demonstration of “Tipu’s Tiger,” <https://vimeo.com/8973957>.

“The Death of Munrow,” (Earthenware Ceramic, c. 1820-1830),

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/708701>.

Peter Boomgaard, “Devouring the Hearts of the People: The Weretiger,” from *Frontiers of Fear: Tigers and People in the Malay World, 1600-1950* (2001). Access through UChicago Library.

Charles E. Hammond, “Sacred Metamorphosis: The Weretiger and the Shaman,” *Acta*

Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae (46.2, 1992/3),
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23658449>.

Thursday, 5/6.

Selection from Jim Corbett, *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* (1944), “Author’s Note” & “The Champawat Man-Eater.”

<https://archive.org/details/maneatersofkumao029903mbp/page/n5/mode/2up>.

Varun Sharma, “Rise and Fall of the ‘Man-Eater’: The Changing Science and Technology of a Species (1860-present),” *History and Sociology of South Asia* (10.1, 2016).

MIDTERM PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE.

WEEK 6. Featured Creature II: Shark Week!

Tuesday, 5/11.

Jaws, dir. Steven Spielberg (1975)

Selection from Peter Benchley, *Jaws* (1974),

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/11203/jaws-by-peter-benchley/9780345544148/excerpt>.

Thursday, 5/13.

Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Part 1, chapters III & IV (c. 553 CE), trans. H. B. Dewing (1914-1940),

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/History_of_the_Wars/Book_I.

John Singleton Copley, “Watson and the Shark” (1778),

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9c/Watsonandtheshark-originalFXD.jpg>

Louis P. Masur, “Reading Watson and the Shark,” *The New England Quarterly* (67.3, Sept. 1994).

“Shark Kills Bather Off Jersey Beach,” “Many See Sharks, But All Get Away,”

“Theorizing About Sharks,” “Perhaps It Was A Turtle,” & “Sharks & Submarines,”
The New York Times (July 1916).

Adrian Peace, “Shark attack! A cultural approach,” *Anthropology Today* (31.5, 2015).

Jennifer Adams Martin, “When Sharks (Don’t) Attack: Wild Animal Agency in Historical Narratives,” *Environmental History* (16.3, July 2011).

Christopher Neff & Robert Hueter, “Science, policy, and the public discourse of shark ‘attack’: a proposal for reclassifying human-shark interactions,” *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* (3, 2013).

WEEK 7. Fantasies & Falsehoods

Tuesday, 5/18.

The Host, dir. Bong Joon-ho (2006)

Steve Biodrowski, “The Host: Monstrous Political Satire,” *Hollywood Gothique* (March 2007), <http://hollywoodgothique.bravejournal.com/entry/24485>.

Thursday, 5/20.

Patrick Tohall, “The Dobhar-Chú Tombstones of Glenade, Co. Leitrim,” *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (78.2, 1948).

“Crinoida Dajeeana: The Man-eating Tree of Madagascar,”

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2011/New%20York%20NY%20World/New%20York%20NY%20World%201880-1881%20Grayscale/New%20York%20NY%20World%201880->

[1881%20Grayscale%20-%200070.pdf](#), transcribed more clearly:
[https://hatch.kookscience.com/wiki/Crinoida Dajeeana, the Devil Tree of Madagascar](https://hatch.kookscience.com/wiki/Crinoida_Dajeeana,_the_Devil_Tree_of_Madagascar) (under “The Article”).

T. S. Miller, “Lives of the Monster Plants: The Revenge of the Vegetable in the Age of Animal Studies,” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* (23.3, 2012).

William Hichens, “African Mystery Beasts,” *Discovery: The Popular Journal of Knowledge* (December 1937), https://www.meta-religion.com/Paranormale/Cryptozoology/african_mystery_beasts.htm.

Steven G. Platt et al., “Man Eating by Estuarine Crocodiles: The Ramree Island Massacre Revisited,” *The Herpetological Bulletin* (75, 2001).

Jonathan Dyer, “Big stories about big squids: The story of the Britannia and the birth of a wartime urban legend,” *War In History* (2020).

Trailer for “Megalodon: The New Evidence,” *Discovery Channel* (2014),
<https://vimeo.com/181855860>.

WEEK 8. Maneaters of Tsavo & The Maneater of Mfuwe

Tuesday, 4/27.

Selections from John Henry Patterson, *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* (1908), Chapters I, II, VI, VIII, & IX.

<https://archive.org/details/maneaterstsavoao0opattgoog/page/n6/mode/2up>

Darren Naish, “The Man-Eater of Mfuwe,” *Tetrapod Zoology* (May 2012),

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/tetrapod-zoology/man-eater-of-mfuwe/>

Thursday, 4/29.

Field Museum Trip?!?!

WEEK 9. Contemporary news and wrapup.

Tuesday, 5/25.

Chris Wilbert, “What is Doing the Killing? Animal Attacks, Man-Eaters, and Shifting Boundaries and Flows of Human-Animal Relations,” *Killing Animals: The Animal Studies Group* (2006), pp. 30-49. Access through *UChicago Library*.

Vincenzo Penteriani et al., “Human behaviour can trigger large carnivore attacks in developed countries,” *Scientific Reports* (6, 2016),

<https://www.nature.com/articles/srep20552>.

John D.C. Linnell and Julien Alleau, “Predators That Kill Humans: Myth, Reality, Context and the Politics of Wolf Attacks on People,” *Problematic Wildlife*, ed. F. M. Angelici (2016).

Mark Townsend, “Return of the great white killer,” *The Guardian* (18 Dec. 2004)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/dec/19/australia.theobserver>

“Details emerge about wolves and death of Ontario man,” *CBC News* (10 Mar. 2006)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/details-emerge-about-wolves-and-death-of-ontario-man-1.611285>

“Coyotes kill Toronto singer in Cape Breton,” *CBC News* (28 Oct. 2009)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/coyotes-kill-toronto-singer-in-cape-breton-1.779304>

Ian Austen, “Mother of Canadian Singer Killed by Coyotes Asks That the Animals Be

Spared,” *The New York Times* (1 Nov. 2009)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/02/world/americas/02coyote.html>.

“Disney Alligator Attack,” *The Guardian* (22 Aug. 2016)

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/23/disney-alligator-attack-father-tried-to-wrestle-sons-head-from-animals-jaws>

“You’re not going to die’: 911 transcripts from cougar attack reveal panic and desperation,” *The Guardian* (23 May 2018)

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/may/24/cougar-attack-911-transcripts-washington-state> NOTE: this article uses incorrect pronouns for the victim SJ Brooks, who used they/them pronouns.

Thursday, 5/27.

Michael Fuchs, ““What If Nature Were Trying to Get Back at Us?”: Animals as Agents of Nature’s Revenge in Horror Cinema,” in Kyle Wiggins, ed., *American Revenge Narratives: A Collection of Critical Essays* (2018).

Selections from David Quammen, *Monster of God: The Man-Eating Predator in the Jungles of History and the Mind* (2003).

FINAL PROJECT DUE Wednesday, 6/2.

POLICIES

EXTENSIONS may be granted in consultation with me, up to a week before the due date of a particular assignment. Exceptions are of course made for unforeseen circumstances and emergencies (*especially* this school year).

LATE WORK to which no extension has been granted will ordinarily incur a grading penalty of one-third a full letter grade (so A- work would be given a B+) for every week it is late. Additionally, late work will receive less in-depth commentary from me and the writing intern—this is simply a matter of my time!

PLAGIARISM—the use of any writing or ideas that are not your own in official assignments, without appropriate quotation and citation—will result in automatic no credit for that assignment, and potential disciplinary action. If you are unsure what plagiarism constitutes, or are concerned about how to avoid it, please check with me.

ZOOM CLASS ETIQUETTE is an exciting new field of behavioral norms. In general, I ask that, during class time, you:

- keep your video on. Brief, occasional lapses into darkness are fine; long, sustained periods of invisibility may be an issue. If your internet connection makes this difficult for you, please contact me and we’ll work out a solution.
- refrain from browsing unrelated sites on your computer or other devices. Splitting your attention between class and TikTok is disruptive to the discussion atmosphere, and does no one any favors. Extended forays across the internet will likely lead to lapses in your notes, which—if it becomes a pattern—I am likely to notice. If you find yourself regularly tempted by digital wanderlust, please talk to me and we will work out some strategies (on your part and mine!) to help you and the class remain focused and productive.
- Communicate! In the switch to digital, I lose a lot of useful information related to your academic engagement and progress. The only way to recoup that is through

communication, both during class and outside of it. I've built in official channels for this, such as office hours, and will be checking in on other aspects of the course throughout the semester. But I will be more reliant than I would be in-person on hearing from you when things aren't working (technologically, pedagogically, etc.)—and, for that matter, when they are!

2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR STATEMENT

These are difficult times! I recognize that many of us may be facing challenges related to any number of the current crises our world is experiencing, and that these may affect our ability to be present (literally and/or figuratively) in class. I will strive to be understanding, accommodating, and compassionate, and I ask that you extend understanding, accommodation, and compassion to one another, both inside and outside class.

CONTENT STATEMENT

Given the nature of our subject material, many of our texts contain gruesome, horrific, and/or disturbing imagery. Some also include references to sexual violence and/or colonialist/racist depictions of other cultures. If you are concerned about your ability to engage with any of this material, please contact me so that we can discuss possible approaches.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

If you need any special accommodations, please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided by the Student Disability Services office: disabilities@uchicago.edu, 773-702-6000) as soon as possible so that we may discuss how your accommodations may be implemented.