

Modernity and the Slaughterhouse: Violence, Labor, and Animals in Contemporary Society



Political Science 191.405 | Fall 2018

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Office Hours | Thursdays 1:30-2:30 (or by appointment)

Schedule | Tues. and Thurs. 12-1:15

Location | Croft B32

The United States today produces and consumes more meat than ever, but most Americans live at an increasing geographic and perceptual distance from animals and the humans who work with them, relying on a system of industrial production and a complex division of labor. This course approaches the politics of this distribution of labor, violence, and human-animal relations from a site rarely considered in political analysis: the modern slaughterhouse. It engages with this institution as a historical and cultural object, starting from an analysis of its emergence and operations to ask broader questions about politics under contemporary capitalism in the not-quite-post-industrial USA. We will draw on an interdisciplinary range of academic and non-academic sources ranging from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, to foundational works by Zygmunt Bauman and Peter Singer, to recent ethnographic and journalistic accounts of animal production, through to documentary films and transcripts of Senate Committee hearings. Using these, we will explore a range of issues including the relationships between institutions and rationality, visibility and invisibility, and labor and marginalization, as well as examine the narratives ostensibly peaceful, liberal democracies tell themselves about violence, history, and progress.

Learning Outcomes:

By the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Engage with central theoretical concepts in the study of social practices and institutions.
- Critically engage with - and put into conversation with each other - multi-disciplinary academic and non-academic sources.
- Link production and consumption practices to the broader historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which they occur.
- Write a structured, critical essay that draws attention to a contemporary social problem.

Requirements:

Students will be assessed according to the following criteria:

1. Participation (20%)

Given that this is a seminar, thorough preparation and active participation are key to the group getting the most out of the class. Through discussions, we will delve deeply into readings, explore alternative avenues for thought and action, and critique each other's work. This grade will reflect each student's active contribution to the class.

2. Reading responses (20%)

As part of preparation, for every class each student will be required to prepare a brief, one-paragraph reflection on the assigned readings. This can take the form of engaging with a particular aspect of the reading (i.e. theory, examples/cases, etc.), putting the readings in conversation with others you have read in this class, or considering how they speak to your developing project (see Requirement 3 below). With each response, you must submit one specific question regarding the reading for potential class discussion. Students can opt out of responses for any *four* classes of their choice. Reading responses are due by email (in the body of the email, not as attachments) before midnight on the day before each class. These will be graded on a binary pass-fail system.

3. Research Paper (60%)

Your major assignment will be a long-form research paper, which will critically explore a social or political institution, broadly defined (not an individual or isolated practice), that requires, encourages, or causes some form of violent practice or labor. This essay should directly draw on, or critically engage with, at least three of the sources covered in class. Throughout the semester you will hand in a proposal and an annotated bibliography, circulate an early draft for peer review, and present your project to the group, with each step receiving individual grades. The final paper will be due on the last day of the exam period BEFORE MIDNIGHT (NO EXCEPTIONS). All other hand-ins must be submitted by email in .pdf format before midnight the day before the class when they are due.

* Grade breakdown: Proposal (5%), annotated bibliography (5%), submission of draft AND active participation in peer review (10%), presentation (10%), final paper (30%).

Required Texts:

Pachirat, Timothy. (2011) *Every Twelve Seconds*. Yale University Press.

Foucault, Michel. (1995 [1975]) *Discipline and Punish*. Vintage Books edition (trans. A. Sheridan).

Sinclair, Upton. (1906) *The Jungle*. Any edition – you should be able to find cheap used copies.

A note on reading volume and work required:

This class will involve an extensive amount of reading, especially in the first weeks (100+ pages per week, and often more). Students are expected to have read all assigned readings in order to complete the required response papers and be able to participate effectively in class discussions. On days/weeks on which assignments are due, the reading load will be reduced. A large part of your grade relies on this reading given that the response papers and participation make up 40% of your grade, and the readings should serve as at least a conceptual basis for your essay assignment.

Policy on lateness and absences:

Absences may justify some grade reduction and a total of four absences mandate a reduction of one letter grade for the course. More than four absences mandate a failing grade for the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances. The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students.

An important note on computers and phones:

Computers (laptops, iPads, etc.) and phones (“smart” or otherwise) may not be used in the classroom. If for some reason you absolutely need to use your phone and/or send a text or email during class, please excuse yourself from the classroom. If you are formally registered with the University to use technology due to extenuating circumstances, please let me know and an exception will be made in your case.

Plagiarism and academic honesty:

Plagiarism is the act of passing off someone else’s work as your own or using others’ words or ideas without proper citation or acknowledgement. This includes paraphrasing an author’s words or arguments and/or using “authorless” information from policy reports, online sources, or digital commons (like Wikipedia) without attribution. Any ideas or words which are not your own must be cited. Plagiarism is one of the most serious academic offenses and will be treated as such.

Course Schedule:

Week 1

September 4
No readings

September 6
**** NO CLASS - I WILL BE AWAY FOR A CONFERENCE ****

Week 2 – Industrialized Slaughter in America (a Question of Progress)

September 11
• Sinclair, Upton. (1906) *The Jungle*.

September 13
• Pinker, Steven (2011) *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. Selections.
• Elias, Norbert. (2000 [1939]) *The Civilizing Process*. Selections

NOTE ADDITION OF PINKER WALL STREET JOURNAL ARTICLE

Week 3 – Making Life Cheap (a Question of Capital)

September 18
• Marx, Karl. (1990 [1876]). *Capital*, Vol.1. Selections.
• Read, Leonard. (2010 [1958]) *I, Pencil*. (7 pages)

September 20
• Cronon, William. (1991) *Nature's Metropolis*. Ch. 5
• Patel, Raj and Moore, Jason. (2017) *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*. Ch.2

MAYBE SEND OUT THE GUARDIAN NUGGET ARTICLE

Week 4 - Violence and Society: Institutionalization and Bureaucratization Part 1

September 25
• Foucault, Michel. (1995 [1975]) *Discipline and Punish*. Parts 1 and 2.

September 27
• Foucault, Michel. (1995 [1975]) *Discipline and Punish*. Parts 3 and 4.

Week 5 – Violence and Society: Institutionalization and Bureaucratization Part 2

October 2

- Weber, Max. (1922) *Economy and Society*. Selections
- Bauman, Zygmunt. (1991). *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Selections.

October 4

In-class movie: *Le Sang de Betes* (1949) by Georges Franju. (22 min.)

*** Movie contains some graphic images of violence ***

- More, Thomas. (1516) *Utopia*. Selections. (2 pages)
- Vialles, Noeie. (1994) *Animal to Edible*. Introduction and Chapter 1.
- Young Lee, Paula. (2008) “Siting the Slaughterhouse: From Shed to Factory.” pp.1-9.
- Bataille, Georges. (1929) *Slaughterhouse*. (1 page)

Week 6 – Dispatches from the Kill Floor

October 9

***** PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE TODAY *****

- Pachirat, Timothy. (2011) *Every Twelve Seconds*. Chapter 1- 4

October 11

- Pachirat, Timothy. (2011) *Every Twelve Seconds*. Chapter 5- 8

MAYBE ASSIGN PACHIRAT REVIEWS AND INTERVIEW FROM THE ATLANTIC

Week 7 – Violent Labor

October 16

- Ribas, Vanesa. (2015) *On the Line*. Chapter 1.
- Oxfam (2017) *Lives on the Line*.
- NPR (2016) “Working ‘The Chain.’”

FLIP THESE - HOROWITZ UP, NPR AND OXFAM DOWN

October 18

Movie (view before class): *American Dream* (1990) by Barbara Kopple. (100 min.)

- Horowitz, Roger. (1997) *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!* Selections.
- David, Scott. (2018) “America's horrifying new plan for animals: highspeed slaughterhouses.” *The Guardian*. March 6.
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. (2018) “USDA to hog slaughterhouses: Choose your own (faster) production speed.”

Week 8 – Interspecies Entanglements

Movie (view before class): *Meat* (1976) by Frederic Wiseman. (110 min.)

*** Movie contains some graphic images of violence ***

October 23

- Fitzgerald, Amy. (2010) “A Social History of the Slaughterhouse.” *Human Ecology Review*. 17(1): 58-69.
- Hribal, Jason. (2003) “Animals Are Part of the Working Class.” *Labor History*. 44(4): 435-453.

October 25

***** ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE TODAY *****

- Johnson, Nathanael. (2006) “Swine of the Times.” *Harper’s*. May.
- Blanchette, Alex. (2015) “Herding Species.” *Cultural Anthropology*. 30(4): 640-669.

Week 9 – The Emergence of a Critique

October 30

- Singer, Peter. (1975) *Animal Liberation*. Ch. 1, 3

November 1

- Jasper, James and Nelkin, Dorothy. (1992) *The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest*. Chapters 1-3

Week 10 – The Politics of Sight

November 6

- Pollan, Michael. (2002) “An Animal’s Place.” *The New York Times*. (1 page)
- Woodhouse, Leighton. (2013) “Charged With the Crime of Filming a Slaughterhouse.” *The Nation*. July 31. (2 pages)
- Pedersen, Helena (2010). “Terror From the Stare: Visual Landscapes of Meat Production.” *Antennae*. No.14: 34-38
- Broad, Garrett. (2016) “Animal Production, Ag-gag Laws, and the Social Production of Ignorance: Exploring the Role of Storytelling.” *Environmental Communication*. 10(1): 43-61.

November 8

- Pachirat, Timothy. (2011) *Every Twelve Seconds*. Chapter 9.
- Dutkiewicz, Jan (2018) “Transparency and the Factory Farm.” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies*. 18(2): 19-32.

Week 11 – Political Ecologies

November 13

- Weis, Tony. (2013) *The Ecological Hoofprint*. Ch. 2
- Emel, Jody and Neo, Harvey. (2011) “Killing for Profit: Global Livestock Industries and Their Socio-Ecological Implications.” In Peet, Robbins, and Watts (eds.) *Global Political Ecology*.

November 15

- Schneider, Mindi. (2017) “Wasting the Rural: Meat, Manure, and the Politics of Agro-industrialization in Contemporary China.” *Geoforum*. 78: 89-97.
- n.a. (2013) Smithfield And Beyond: Examining Foreign Purchases of American Food Companies. Hearing Before the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition And Forestry United States Senate, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress, First Session, July 10. Selections.

***** THANKSGIVING BREAK NOVEMBER 19-25: NO CLASS *****

Week 12 – The Promises and Pitfalls of Market-Based Politics: The Case of In-Vitro Meat

November 27

***** PEER REVIEW SESSION *****

No readings.

November 29

- Hopkins, Patrick and Dacey, Austin. (2008) “Vegetarian meat: Could technology save animals and satisfy meat eaters?” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*. 21(6): 579–596.
- Chiles, Robert M. (2013) “Intertwined Ambiguities: Meat, In Vitro Meat, and the Ideological Construction of the Marketplace.” *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. 12(6): 472–482.

Week 13 – Final Presentations

December 4

Final presentations (day 1) – no readings

December 6

Final presentations (day 2) and class wrap-up – no readings