**Three Essays: Multisensorial Animal Ethics Reflections (3 x 20 points each = 60pts)**

**Grading:** 20 points each

**Turning in:** Upload to Canvas by class time on sessionsnoted in syllabus

**Description:** Students will write three 1-1.5 page reflections (not including Works Cited single-spaced, 12-pt font) based on the below prompts. In each essay, students will seek a cumulative 20-40-minute multisensorial encounter with a life form or zone in order to consider discourses and habits that have shaped their past relation to animals in light of course texts and also explore productive threshold concepts and modes of multisensorial togetherness capable of producing new relational futures.

* **What counts as a “multisensorial encounter with a life form or zone”?** The answer is open and varied: being with ants on a sidewalk, attending to a companion animal in a new way or with new information; being with lobsters in a tank at the grocery store or fish in a pond, removing a spider from the shower, noticing birds, bees, squirrels or other wildlife, being with a tree or plant or life forms related to that tree or plant, being with an animal killed on the road or in other ways, being with the meat, milk, or dairy aisle, learning something about the habits and history of local wildlife. *This is not an exhaustive list of activities and is only meant to spur your imagination*
* **Your experience should change for each essay.** You can plan it, but I encourage you to let yourself be chosen by a life form or life zone, whatever that might mean to you. You’ll notice that I often say “being with” (which also can mean “becoming with”) rather than watch, observe. We are seeking multisensorial encounters that includes but is not limited to the visual.
* **Organize your essays into paragraphs, using topic sentences to introduce new ideas**. Avoid one long unbroken page of text.
* **Use citations/Works Cited to engage with approx. 3-6 sources per essay and contribute to the history of ideas**. Each essay should reflect a breadth of ideas, terms, quotes, and concepts from applicable course readings. Every direct quote, borrowed idea, or paraphrase must be cited with in-text (author date, page) citations, signal phrases (when needed; “Harris asserts. . . “)and Works Cited/Bibliography using *The Chicago Manual of Style* (link in Syllabus “Resources”). See sample below.

**ESSAY 1 PROMPT:** **Seeing Your Worldview (Week 0-2b class readings)**

Seek out a multisensorial experience with a life form or life zone for, ideally for a cumulative total of 20-40 minutes (all at one time or you may encounter/revisit more than once). Referencing your experience, alongside a **selection** of the worldviews, claims, and common discourses we’ve considered in weeks 0-2b (3-6 sources), reflect on aspects of your worldview that have shaped your thinking, experiences, and preferred forms of knowing (epistemology) other-than-human life. What do these worldviews make more or less visible, hearable, imaginable, understandable, considerable, etc. Use 3-6 sources as a guideline.

**ESSAY 2 PROMPT:** **Multiple Ways of Knowing/Knowing is Relational (Week 5a-7b class readings)** Seek out a multisensorial experience with a life form or life zone for, ideally for a cumulative total of 20-40 minutes (all at one time or you may encounter/revisit more than once). Referencing your experience, alongside **a selection** of the claims, arguments, and narratives we’ve considered in weeks 5a-7b (3-6 sources, though you can reference earlier ideas as well to illuminate an insight), reflect on the multiple ways that you or other beings gain knowledge and/or how knowledge emerges in relational networks rather than isolation.

How does experiencing multiple ways of knowing or the relational aspect of knowledge impact your ideas or actions with other-than-human beings or yourself?

**ESSAY 3 PROMPT:** **Multispecies Communication and Transrational/Embodied Knowledge (Week 8a-10b class readings)** Seek out a multisensorial experience with a life form or life zone for, ideally for a cumulative total of 20-40 minutes (all at one time or you may encounter/revisit more than once). Referencing your experience, alongside **a selection** of the claims, arguments, and narratives we’ve considered in weeks 8a-10b (3-6 sources, though you can reference earlier ideas as well to illuminate an insight), reflect on how transrational/embodied knowledge or multispecies communication impacts your understanding of animal ethics or moral community. Related questions include: Has your sense of “human” or “animal” undergone any changes? What impediments keep you from including multispecies communication or transrational/embodied knowledge as valid?

**Essay Rubric**

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| Criteria checklist | Points |
| **☐ I briefly describe my multisensorial experience** with a life form or life zone for (ideally sought for a cumulative total of 20-40 minutes) | 2 |
| **Reflect on experience and concepts** |  |
| **☐ I’ve engaged at least 3-6 sources** (primarily from assigned weeks) in an accurate and contextual manner | 8 |
| **☐ I’ve used correctly-formatted (author date, page) citations** and signal phrases whenever I use a quote, borrowed idea, or paraphrase, using online *The Chicago Manual of Style* | 3 |
| **☐ I’ve included a Works Cited/bibliography** with authors alphabetized by last name, second line indented and correctly-formatted using online *The Chicago Manual of Style* | 3 |
| **☐ I’ve attempted to join my multisensorial experience with course ideas** in ways that stretch my existing ideas, senses, ethical experimentation, and belief about human-animal relations in ways meaningful to my future | 4 |
| Possible points | 20 |

**Sample of a (very) partial reflection (mostly to show in-text citations):**

Ian Harris, in *A Communion of Subjects,* says that “it could be argued that the often highly anthropomorphic character of the essentially pre-Buddhist folk-tradition of [the *Jataka Tales*] is largely devoid of ‘naturalistic’ content, thus defeating the intention of those who bring them forward as evidence of an authentic Buddhist environmentalist ethic” (2006, 208). Not unlike Kim Socha, who argued that atheists are better suited to engage secular animal rights (though rarely do), I also expect most discussions of this type (i.e., those that attempt to make activism out of dogma) to lead us to the same conclusions: that because the world’s major religions were made (or realized) many thousands of years ago by people who had not yet developed their *sense of self* or *sense of community*—at least in accordance with the fashions of today—these traditions *must always* be out of touch with the modern zeitgeist (Socha 2012). The resultant effect is my impulse away from anything considered “traditional” and toward what I consider some form of “progress.”

So as I sit here listening to this squirrel pair (I can’t always see them, but now I’m wondering, do I actually even hear them?), I keep thinking how baffling it is that the most effective preservative of traditional ideas may not be language or the written word, but instead ideology in any form, secular or religious. What subtle ideologies have led me to have so little curiosity or knowledge about these squirrels? That being said—again, Harris—”a positive approach to the natural world based on a doctrine of enlightened self-interest is better than no approach at all” (2006, 213). Sometimes, even I (a weaker atheist than I once was) perceive my immediate environment as something akin to “godless.” Religion, particularly religion untainted by consumerism—something more like a bodhisattva who “hears the cries of the world” (Harris 2006, 214) rather than a saint—surprises me by offering unexpectedly sensorial guide for the lesson in compassion (I word I’m not sure I understand at all anymore) that all of us really need right now.

**Works Cited**

* Alphabetized by author last names
* Second line indented
* Use The Chicago Manual of Style (linked in syllabus “Resources”)