

FALL 2005 GRINNELL-IN-WASHINGTON PROPOSAL
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I. COURSE PROPOSAL

ANT 295: “Humans” vs. “Not Humans”: What Defines Us and Them?

Description: In this course, we will examine historical, cultural, political, economic, and biological aspects of how and where we draw the line between the human and other species. Our central goal will be to explore “what is human”. We will address some of the following questions.

- 1) Where do we draw the lines biologically – for example, between humans and chimpanzees? How are humans defined and at what point in our evolutionary history did we become “human”? What impact have policies/laws had on these definitions?
- 2) What are basic human rights and should these rights be extended to other species? Why does it matter if policies are implemented that extend rights to the great apes? What impact would such a decision have on our lives – if any? As well, what impact has legislation on the “humane treatment” and “psychological well-being” of animals had on both the definitions and our lives?
- 3) How are humans and not-humans depicted, both currently and historically, in art and literature?
- 4) What has been the impact of religious (e.g., Judeo-Christian, Hinduism) ideology on human and not-human classifications and how we think about these classifications?
- 5) Are there cultural differences (i.e., East vs. West) in how the relationships between, and classifications of, humans and not-humans are expressed?

At the base of this topic is how we define what is and what is not human. For example, what do we do with the so-called “feral children”? They are decidedly genetically human but often totally lacking in those aspects of humanness that we tend to incorporate into our definitions. There is a relatively recent book on feral children (see preliminary bibliography) that presents not only a history of feral children but also reflects upon human nature. It is also important to note that our technology may very well be changing the very definition of humanness. For example, in a recent PBS special (see bibliography), there was discussion of patenting the genetic code of a half chimpanzee/half human. The researcher explained that combining the cells of the two could have a tremendous impact upon our ability to “grow parts” compatible with humans to be used in transplant surgeries, etc. How would such a chimera be classified? Would it be human?

It is also important to realize that our definitions of “human” and “not human” do not occur in a scientific vacuum. The definitions reflect, and are reflected in, many other aspects of our lives and cultures. There are, for example, central ideological differences in various cultures’ and religions’ views on where the line is drawn between “human” and “not human”, whether such a line actually exists, and/or whether that line is

permeable. It is for these reasons that we will examine art, literature, religion, and culture – as well as science – in our exploration of this topic.

In examining this topic, we will draw heavily upon local resources in the DC area. See examples below:

Where do we draw the lines biologically and Basic human rights and their extension to other species: There is currently a movement to extend basic human rights to the great apes. The Great Ape Project (<http://www.greatapeproject.org/gapintroduction.html>) is the group behind this movement and details of their project are available at the above web site. Although the project is headquartered in Oregon, their Secretary and Board member is located in DC (Debra Erenberg, Esq. otterchick_99@yahoo.com) upon whom I hope to be able to call for a presentation. As well, for this section, we will discuss and examine the human-nonhuman primate biological relationship and the point at which we became human. In examining how different groups view the defining of humans and not-humans we may also meet with representatives of the following organizations: PETA (<http://www.peta.org/about/index.html>) which is based in Norfolk, VA ; the Jane Goodall Institute (<http://www.janegoodall.org/index.html>) located in Silver Spring, MD; the World Wildlife Fund (<http://www.worldwildlife.org/>) located at 1250 24th St. N.W. in DC, and the National Rifle Association (<http://www.nra.org>) who have a field representative (Donald Buckland) in Stuart, VA (office - 276-694-2322). As part of this section, students will be required to participate in a group field trip to visit the National Zoo and the Think Tank project there (<http://natzoo.si.edu/Animals/ThinkTank/Exhibit/default.cfm>).

Legislation was recently introduced in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to increase penalties for engaging in interstate animal-fighting activity and to make it illegal to ship fighting instruments, such as razor-sharp knives and gaffs, which are used in cockfighting, across state lines and out of the country. S 736, the Senate version of the bill (<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query>), and HR 1532, the House version, if passed, will make it easier for law-enforcement officials to prosecute individuals involved in dogfighting and cockfighting activity. Part of the issue of defining humans and not-humans is the treatment of the latter. Laws governing that treatment have political, economic, and policy implications. One of the Senators who has been active in this issue (and Senate Bill S 736) is Senator Harkin. As well, there is the issue of stem-cell research and the recent legislation prohibiting federal sponsorship of the acquisition of new stem-lines. Harkin is known to be quite outspoken on issues such as cloning and genetically modified organisms and it is my understanding that he is very amenable to meeting with his constituents. Therefore, I hope to arrange a meeting with him to discuss both the above mentioned legislation and other issues relevant to the issue of “what is human”. I would like students to think about what it means to the definitions of human/not human to legislate “humane treatment” and “psychological well-being” of animals vs. the creation of stem-lines or the prohibition of abortion. If we can keep it strictly academic, it might be interesting to talk to local representatives of “pro-life” and “pro-choice” groups.

The goal of these sections is to have students think about the above listed issues and questions, gain exposure to very different views, and attempt to synthesize these perspectives. Students will be required to write a short paper (3-4 pages) towards this end.

The depiction of humans and not-humans in art and literature: For this section, we will utilize the resources of local museums including, but not limited to, the National Museum of African Art (<http://www.nmafa.si.edu/default.htm>), the National Gallery of Art (<http://www.nga.gov/>), and the National Museum of Natural History (<http://www.mnh.si.edu/>). Students will be required to make independent weekend trips to at least two of these museums to compare, for example, works of art from different time periods, works of art from different cultures, works of art vs. animal displays, or animal displays vs. early hominid displays. These comparisons will result in short (2-3 pg), primarily descriptive papers. As well, we will read and discuss 2-3 novels where the lines between what is human and non-human, and the characteristics of each, are blurred.

Are there cultural differences in the defining of human and not-human: Western vs. Eastern considerations of the line between human and not-human are generally viewed as quite different. These differences are particularly apparent in the studies of non-human primates that have been conducted under these two traditions. For this section, we will read some works that specifically address these differences.

II: QUALIFICATIONS FOR INTERNSHIP SEMINAR

I am very enthusiastic about the possibility of directing the Grinnell-in-Washington program, teaching the above outlined course, and leading the internship seminar. While far from a native of the area, I have visited DC on four occasions over the past six years. On each of those occasions, I have navigated almost entirely by Metro, visited various museums and national monuments, and visited various parts of the city. With each successive visit, I have become more comfortable with the terrain and the public transportation system. I believe this familiarity is useful in both the planning and the leading aspects of the program. If chosen, I see myself as an active recruiter for the GIW program. Having been there on several occasions will allow me to better relate to the students what to expect in DC.

In terms of supervising the internship seminar specifically, I can apply various experiences from the past 8 years. During this time, I have supervised several summer internships and several semester-long and/or year-long MAPs. Four internships that come to mind were Annie Evans' ('98) internship at a primate facility in NM, Rebecca Peters' ('00) at Grinnell Regional Medical Center, Jodie LaPoint's ('99) in Madagascar, and Laurie Kaufmann's ('99) in Costa Rica. All of these were successful and each of these former students is currently pursuing either a Master's or PhD in a field directly related to her internship experience. As well, I supervised two year-long MAP's [Katie Burdett ('02) and Gary Oppenheim ('01)] where the students had to establish a relationship with a zoo and collect behavioral data over winter break. Finally, in spring

'03 I taught a Human Ethology MAP seminar where 5 students each had to design a research project, collect data, analyze their data, write it up, and give a public presentation at the Iowa Academy of Science meetings in April 2003. While the above experiences were all quite different, they did share some key aspects. All required me to work closely with the student – either prior or during his/her internship/MAP – to design and facilitate the project. All required ongoing supervision – either in person or via email/letters. Several required me to be in periodic contact with the on-site supervisor. Finally, all required me to be able to evaluate the student's work at the completion of the project on topics ranging from non-traditional medicine, to primate well-being, to implicit dominance hierarchies among the student senate. Given these experiences, I believe I will be able to work successfully with the Grinnell students on this program in advising them regarding their internships.

III: DEPARTMENTAL APPROVAL

As department chair, I have given myself my approval to lead the GIW program in fall 2005. However, I have also discussed my interest in leading this program with all members of my department and received their support and approval as well. Obviously, any time that a department member is away on a “non-replaced” program or leave, the department suffers. In the anthropology department, we generally manage to work around these costs and encourage our faculty members to take advantage of leading both Grinnell and ACM programs. I do encourage the administration to look for ways in which faculty leading these programs might actually be replaced so that all departments feel equally able to participate.

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