

Art 185 Interspecies Collaboration Spring 2013

Time: M 1:00PM- 4:50PM.

Location: ARTS 2220. However the class will also take place where our collaborators are located: the beach, the mountains, parks, Santa Cruz Island, in your homes, animal shelters...

Instructor: Lisa Jevbratt

Websites:

http://rosebud.arts.ucsb.edu/~jevbratt/teaching/s_13/185/

<http://interspeciescollaboration.net>

Prerequisites: A strong interest and dedication to the content of the class, willingness to experiment, and patience.

This is an experimental and experiential class exploring the possibility and implications of making art projects together with individuals of other species. The focus of the class is on finding, communicating and working together with our collaborators. The projects can be manifested in a wide range of media and genres; they can be performative, visual, conceptual etc. The class is a critical investigation of our relationship with non-human animals. We will be using aesthetic expressions and collaborations to explore our relationship with non-human animals and to research the world we share together with them. The projects have the potential of making us aware of, and facilitate, an intellectual, emotional and spiritual partnership with the species around us.

A few readings from human/animal studies, ecology and related fields will aid in the contextualization of our work. We will also look at how other artists have been exploring the field as well as the aesthetic expressions of other species.

Our research and projects will be documented and presented on the website interspeciescollaboration.net, which is created for the class but open to the general public as well. The site provides an easy way to document the progress of your projects and it allows us to share them and resources and websites amongst ourselves and with an audience. You do not need any experience creating web pages. (However students are welcomed to participate in the continuing development of the site in terms of its structure and functionality.)

The class time will be spent on lectures, discussions, video screenings, field trips, working on projects (sometimes in locations other than the class room), and the creation of a gallery show. You have to spend a large amount of time outside class working on projects and writing about them.

Class Assignments/Requirements

Project(s) (40% of the grade)

- **One or several independent/group projects:**

Create one or more art projects in collaboration with non-human animals. Art projects are here loosely defined as an aesthetic investigation of any kind. It can involve movement, sound, visuals, systems, technologies etc. You could also be making tools that enable collaborations with other species. Collaboration is for this purpose defined as working together with, or more loosely as doing

something in parallel with someone. You need to be able to imagine that the animal is collaborating with you, that they have some kind of interest in the project, and that you are not using the animal. One of the reasons for doing these projects is to discuss what “art” and “collaboration” is. Another is to become more respectful of other species experience of the world, and to learn something about it through them.

You can work with wild animals, semi-wild animals such as farm animals (and maybe lab animals), and pets. All will provide specific challenges and opportunities. Wild animals might be the most difficult to have sustained contact with, domesticated and semi-domesticated animals require the permission and interest of their owners, and that can be difficult to get. Pets might be the easiest to communicate with but you might not know any that seem like they want to collaborate. There are many shelters and rescue organization around Santa Barbara (see class website.) They might be interested in having people collaborating with their animals and it could be very rewarding to work with those animals since they might be deprived of attention, lonely and bored.

You can work directly with the animals or create situations or technologies that allow you to interact and collaborate over time, as long as you feel that your collaborator is “aware” of the collaboration.

- **Weekly project reports:**

The progress of the project(s) should be documented every week on interspeciescollaboration.net. Project reports should include text and some visual or audio documentation. The reports should include everything from how an idea is formed, how collaborators are contacted and approached, and potential results from the collaboration. You can think of the reports as a blogging to some extent. Document also what is not working, what feels frustrating and difficult. (Write at least 500 words per week.)

- **Class activity responses:**

You will also be asked to upload responses to specific questions or comment on (and document) class activities to the site.

Project exhibition (20% of the grade)

Each student will exhibit one or more projects made during the quarter. The projects can be exhibited in the form of physical art works: paintings, sculptures, installations etc. You can also exhibit on-site performances, or documentation of work made elsewhere (for that the weekly progress reports can be used to some extent but it should be reworked to fit within a gallery exhibition context).

Building Context (15% of the grade)

- During the course of the class submit at least 5 resources (descriptions and links to websites, art projects, books, articles, music etc. made by others) related to Interspecies Collaboration to interspeciescollaboration.net. They have to fit into the existing subjects (or if you identify a new subject of importance ask Lisa to add it to the site).

- One class presentation of initial research for a project. The research should include information regarding habits, play- and aesthetic- behavior etc. about the species you work with and cultural, sociological and psychological implications and significance of our relationship with that species.
- Submit comments on other student's projects to the site.
- Submit comments on existing resources on the site.

Readings (10% of the grade)

Required:

The readings will be discussed in class, used as inspiration and contextualization of projects. In addition you will write short reviews of the required texts on interspeciescollaboration.net.

Reading 1:

- Chapter 1: *The Turkey Trot* and Chapter 4: *Interspecies Protocol* from [The Man Who Talks to Whales: the Art of Interspecies Communication](#) by Jim Nollman (Sentient Publication, 2002). [Purchase book online, link on class homepage.]

Reading 2:

- Introduction Chapter: *The idiot, the Voyeur and the Moralist* (and potentially one more chapter) from *Artist | Animal (Posthumanities)* by Steve Baker (University of Minnesota Press 2013) [Copies will be provided].

Reading 3:

- Chapter 4, *Comparative Psychology meets Evolutionary Biology* by Elliot Sober from [Thinking With Animals: New Perspectives On Anthropomorphism](#) ed. Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman (Columbia University Press 2005) [Copies will be provided]
- Chapter 10, *Umwelt*, from [The Open, Man and Animal](#) by Giorgio Agamben (Stanford University Press 2004) [Copies will be provided].

Suggested:

- All remaining chapters in the books above.
- There are plenty of interesting/important texts on human/animal relationships, animal studies philosophy etc. listed on <http://interspeciescollaboration.net>.

Class Involvement (15% of the grade)

- Level of participation in discussions, sharing energy, verbal feedback to fellow students etc.