

COURSE SYLLABUS

I. BASIC COURSE INFORMATION

Course Title: Bestiary
Course No.: PIC310 Course Section: 1
School: Department: PIC Program:
Days: Tuesday Time: 5-7:50pm Place of class meetings: East Hall #201
Credit hours: 3
Course Coordinator or Chairperson (where applicable): Amir Parsa
Prerequisite courses/skills/other restrictions:

II. INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Virginia Wagner Academic Title: Visiting Instructor
Office Location: Foundations Dept. 406 Main Building
Contact Information:
Office hours: By appointment
Phone no(s): 718 636 3617 Appropriate times to call:
Email address: vwagner2@pratt.edu Class listserv:
Special Instructions:

III. COURSE DESCRIPTION

PRATT INTEGRATIVE COURSES

The Pratt Integrative Courses are designed as interdisciplinary explorations of a wide range of possible content, putting into practice multiple ways of thinking and ways of making. The courses will employ and integrate skills students have acquired in both studio and general education classes, recombining them in novel and unexpected ways that test, challenge, and expand the student's creative capacities.

These interdisciplinary courses allow students to explore themes and topics outside their majors, to delve deeply into areas of research that cross disciplinary boundaries, and to work with students in other departments on creative/critical and collaborative projects. They are taken by students during the period of their career when they have completed their Foundation courses and their general education core work, and are delving more deeply into the specialized training of their major disciplines and the post-core courses in liberal arts.

The overall objective of these courses is to provide a unifying moment in the educational experience of Pratt undergraduates and opportunities for them to work on integrative assignments and a culminating project.

BESTIARY

Bestiary will explore the relationship between humankind and animals through words, images, and a combination of the two. Since the dawn of time, images and text describing and depicting animals have been used to explore, investigate, and mediate the complex dynamic of animals as both agents of nature and symbols

of culture. The human/animal bond continues to have relevance, even as we destroy habitat and endanger more and more species. The concept of the Medieval Bestiary will serve as an area of research and a schema for the creation of a novel compendium of words and images that reinforce and complement each other in the service of new stories.

Starting with the Bestiary, the class will look at variety of animal stories from Aesop's fables, Japanese Yokai, and Native American tales, to contemporary short stories and graphic novels. Through them, we will examine our ever-changing relationship to the natural world and the creatures with whom we share it. We will investigate the ways in which these tales illuminate the fears, desires, and ideologies of the societies that birthed them.

The format of the class will be interdisciplinary -- composed of lectures, readings, discussions, creative writing workshops, studio art, field trips, and guest speakers. Each student will research and create written and visual material focused on a species of their choice, exploring its natural history, biology, relationship with humans, and appearance in stories and visual art. The capstone project will be developing a specific animal character through writing and drawings. Students will use this character to reflect on this moment in time, in terms of the state of its species as well as environmental and social concerns. Each student will bind a copy of these final projects, which will become the class Bestiary.

Course Goals

- To build integrative capacities;
- To prepare students to solve unscripted and complex problems both in teams and individually;
- To engage students in practices of making, thinking and doing that integrate multiple disciplinary knowledges and skills in ways that enhance collaborative work and self-knowledge;
- To instill a sense of agency in production of knowledge and creative work;
- To provide a platform for reflection and self-definition that spans majors and academic coursework

Specific Course Goals

- To build awareness and respect for the integrated nature of all life: "Emphasize that all creatures and objects are part of a whole universe." - Comenius
- To understand the communicative range of different media (visual, written, spoken) and be able to harness them appropriately and powerfully in combination.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Students will be able to connect relevant experiences gained outside the classroom and academic knowledge.
- 2) Students will be able to make connections across disciplines and perspectives.
- 3) Students will be able to adapt and apply skills, abilities, theories and methodologies gained in one situation to new contexts and situations.
- 4) Students will be able to integrate modes of communication in ways that enhance meaning, making clear the interdependence of language—both visual and verbal—form, thought and expression.
- 5) Students will be able to self assess, track learning process, and demonstrate a developing sense of self as learner, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.

Specific Course Outcomes

- 6) Students will become conscious of the complex nature of the bond between humans and animals and be able to address it through historical, artistic, literary, social, moral, and philosophical lenses.
- 7) Students will learn how to create visual art and writing from specific points of view. Students become aware of the lens through which they are making, whether it's the lens of a fictional character or themselves, its limitations, prejudices, unique history, and strengths.

COURSE CALENDAR (A living document subject to change)

CLASS 1 AUG 27: IN THE BEGINNING

THEMES

- Introduction to major ideas
- Review of syllabus
- Exploration and comparison of pre-Christian animal texts (Aesop, Aristotle, Ovid, Pliny the Elder, Aelian) and their historical context
- How were these texts transformed and modified by the medieval scribes of the bestiaries?
- How meaning is conveyed through form and simple geometry

CLASSWORK

Create tangrams of animals. Make a drawing of an animal that is as simple as possible but legible as the animal. Then make another drawing of that animal that incorporates an adjective such as “dangerous”.

READING

Genesis Chapters 1-3, New Revised Standard Version of Bible

HOMEWORK

Go around NYC and find an example of animal imagery “in the wild” (in architecture, signage, advertising, etc.). Upload your image (Filename: YourName_Animal_Date) to the Google folder and fill out the worksheet.

CLASS 2 SEPT 3: MEDIEVAL MIRRORS

THEMES

- Cultural ideas about animals in the middle ages - surrogates for aspects of human psychology
- Adaptation of classical and pagan myths and texts to Christian tradition
- Christian bestiaries – who wrote and illustrated them, how they were made, content, cultural significance, worldview
- Racism, sexism, homophobia, reinforcement of class system, and sex-negativity in bestiaries

CLASSWORK

Choose your animal

Close reading of bestiary entries

READING

Debra Hassig, *Sex In the Bestiaries*

HOMEWORK

Make an initial based on the first letter of your animal. This will be included in your bestiary final project.

CLASS 3 SEPT 10: NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY FIELD TRIP

THEMES

- Viewing manuscripts in person!
- Archiving, preservation, documentation, and provenance of texts
- Early graphic design and construction of illuminated manuscripts including calligraphy, line use, margins, cover, embossing, binding

CLASSWORK & HOMEWORK

Design analysis of one page of an illuminated manuscript.

READING

Emily Lord Fransee, *Mistress of a New World: Early Science Fiction in Europe's Age of Discovery*. Public Domain Review

Margaret Lucas Cavendish, *Description of a New World, The Blazing World* (Excerpt)

CLASS 4 SEPT 17: YEAR OF THE ANIMAL 1668

THEMES

- How animal symbolism shifted in Europe in the Renaissance/Baroque periods
- Fables of Jean de la Fontaine
- Animals in the menagerie and labyrinth of King Louis XIV
- Descartes' mechanistic view
- Charles le Brun's Physiognomy
- Margaret Lucas Cavendish

CLASSWORK

Discussion and presentation of medieval design analysis

READING & PODCAST

Charles Foster, *Being a Beast*, Podcast and essay excerpt

HOMEWORK

Do something physical that helps you get into the headspace of your animal. Research its biology and write a short, sensory piece from the point of view of your animal. (3 paragraphs)

CLASS 5 SEPT 24: SCIENTIFIC ILLUSTRATION

THEMES

- History of taxonomy and evolutionary theory with Linneus and Darwin
- Scientific illustrators from Durer to Da Vinci to Maria Sybilla Merian to today
- Techniques: stippling, tracing, line use
- Color in the animal world - mimicry, sexual selection, camouflage, danger

CLASSWORK

Create scientific illustrations from animal skeletons

HOMEWORK

Scientific illustrations of your animal

CLASS 6 OCT 1: CHARACTER DESIGN

GUEST SPEAKER

Jonah Lobe: Character Artist at Bethesda Softworks & Creative Consultant and Streaming Artist at Adobe

THEMES

- Building visual characters
- How to get started in the industry of character design
- How body language and silhouette communicate attributes and personality
- Emotional connection with audience: importance of facial features in anthropomorphizing creatures
- How geometry of form communicates type of character

CLASSWORK

Sketch hybrid animals with a partner

READING

Shigeru Mizuki, *NonNonBa* (Selection)

HOMEWORK

Create a silhouette of your character from at least two angles

CLASS 7 OCT 15: JAPANDEMONIUM

THEMES

- Toriyama Sekien's *Encyclopedia of Yokai* (Creatures), Japan 1778
- Comparison to Collin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal* (Dictionary of Demons), France 1818
- Connection between monsters and culture that birthed them
- Contemporary avatars of Yokai and Japan's influence on fantasy in pop-culture (manga, anime, videogames)
- Creating creatures from collage – examples in contemporary visual art

CLASSWORK

Fill out Dungeons & Dragons character sheet for your character and a foil/antagonist

HOMEWORK

Create a collage of your animal character.

CLASS 8 OCT 22: THE HERO'S JOURNEY

THEMES

- Joseph Campbell's monomyth and Hero's Journey
- Traditional vs experimental plot structures
- Carrying a story across different media – integration, continuity, dynamism

CLASSWORK

Library visit with introduction to folktale research

READING

John W. Roberts, *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom*

HOMEWORK

Research and prepare a presentation on a myth or folktale starring your animal (Due class 10)

CLASS 9 OCT 29: TRICKSTERS

THEMES

- Trickster archetype across various cultures
- West African roots of Br'er Rabbit character and importance among enslaved people in America
- Whose story is it? Questions of appropriation and documentation of stories of underrepresented people

CLASSWORK

Draw attributes of your character

READING

Karen Russell, *St. Lucy's Home For Girls Raised by Wolves*

HOMEWORK

Continue work on presentations

CLASS 10 NOV 5: STORYTELLING

THEMES

- What makes a good spoken story?

CLASS PRESENTATIONS

READING

Zitkala-Sa, Excerpts from her autobiography *School Days of an Indian Girl* (1921) and collected stories from *Old Indian Legends* (1901)

HOMEWORK

Research real world issues that could intersect with your animal story. Begin main text – first 3 paragraphs.

CLASS 11 NOV 12: WORLDBUILDING

THEMES

- Discussion of non-fiction (Zitkala-Sa's autobiography) vs fiction (Karen Russell) vs collected folktales (Zitkala-Sa's *Legends*)
- Discussion about real world issues taken up by animal stories and political/social consequences of those stories
- Animal narrators as heralds of their own issues (habitat destruction, de-speciation, lab testing, factory farming, global warming, extinction, ecological collapse)
- Animal narrators as heralds of human issues (politics, racism, xenophobia, cultural struggle, gender)
- How does an animal-centric world look? Spectrum of anthropomorphism in worldbuilding
- How does landscape/environment affect the development of characters and relationships between characters

CLASSWORK

- Worksheet – answer questions about the world of your story
- Writing workshop of main texts in small groups

HOMEWORK

Continue writing main text

CLASS 12 NOV 19: ILLUMINATING TODAY

THEMES

- What does “illustration” and “illumination” mean today?
- How have our ideas about good design evolved?
- Consider contemporary versions of gilded, ornate, or maximalist design

CLASSWORK

Analyze and compare a favorite illustrated manuscript page with a piece of compelling contemporary design that combines text and image

READING

Emil Ferris, *My Favorite Thing Is Monsters* (Excerpt)

HOMEWORK

Create a frame for your Bestiary entry. Begin layout and design of text and image.

CLASS 13 NOV 26: COMING TOGETHER

CLASSWORK

Peer workshoping of text and image

READING

Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (Excerpt)

HOMEWORK

Create an image for a peer's bestiary entry

CLASS 14 DEC 3: ANIMALS ON THE LOOSE

THEMES

- Broader impact and influence of animal stories
- Importance of animal symbolism today – are they becoming more or less relevant?
- The future of animal stories

CLASSWORK & HOMEWORK

Layout and design of final bestiary

CLASS 15 DEC 10: BINDING THE BESTIARY

Bookbinding

Final Presentations

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Art materials will be largely student-determined and will vary from person to person. A variety of collage and drawing materials is recommended.

NB: There will be a cost for printing your final project at the end of the semester. I will try to keep this cost reasonable and it will be supplemented by the department.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Sketchbook, Notebook, pencil & eraser
- Micron Pen Size 05 (smaller sizes optional)
- Semi-frosted mylar paper – one large sheet
- Book binding materials (student determined at end of semester)

LEADING THE DISCUSSION

Twice in the semester you will lead the discussion around one of our texts with two of your peers. Read the text carefully. Draft questions, pull quotes, and tie the reading to the themes discussed in class. Lead substantive, inclusive conversation during class-time. This will count as one of your assignments.

READINGS PROVIDED BY INSTRUCTOR:

1. Aesop, *Aesops' Fables*. Greece: 620-564 BC.
2. Cavendish, Margaret Lucas, *The Description of a New World Called the Blazing-World*. London, A. Maxwell, 1666.
3. Curley, Michael (Translator), Author Unknown, *Physiologus*. University of Chicago Press, 2009.
4. Ferris, Emil, *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. Fantographics Books, 2017.
5. Foster, Charles, *Being A Beast*. London, Profile Books, 2016.
6. Fransee, Emily Lord, *Mistress of a New World: Early Science Fiction in Europe's Age of Discovery*. Public Domain Review. <https://publicdomainreview.org/2018/10/11/mistress-of-a-new-world-early-science-fiction-in-europes-age-of-discovery/>
7. Hassig, Debra, *Mark of the Beast*. Abington, Routledge, 2000.

8. Mizuki, Shigeru, *NonNonBa*. Drawn and Quarterly, 2012.
9. *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible: Genesis*. National Council of the Churches of Christ, 1989.
10. Roberts, John W., *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.
11. Russel, Karen. *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*, New York, Penguin Random House, 2006.
12. Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. New York, Raw, 1973.
13. Zitkala-Sa, *Old Indian Legends*, Boston Ginn and Company 1901.
14. Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories: The School Days of an Indian Girl*. Washington, Hayworth Publishing House, 1921.

EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated based on the extent to which they have achieved the course's learning outcomes. Assignments will drop ½ letter grade each day that they are late. If you make a serious revision of an assignment after it has been turned in and has received feedback, the grade may be raised by a half or whole letter grade. All assignments that are included in the final project must be revised for that format.

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR VISUAL PROJECTS

- How the piece reflects the particular problem that has been assigned
- The piece as a whole: how the elements of the piece inter-relate to develop a composition
- Quality of the technical execution
- Creativity in problem solving
- Appropriate choice of mediums to best communicate subject matter
- Challenge piece presents to the student

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR WRITTEN WORK

- How the piece reflects the particular problem that has been assigned
- Clear use of voice and point of view
- Creative interpretation of prompt
- Effective and clear writing, correct grammar, precise word choice, varied sentence patterns, etc.

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR BESTIARY FINAL PROJECT

- Effectively brings together all written and visual elements
- Varied use of framing
- Attention to detail in making
- Appropriate materials chosen and integrated with each other
- Creative presentation

In accordance with Pratt Institute's Attendance Policy, the attendance policy for this class is as follows:

Absences: It is mandatory to attend all classes.

Unexcused Absences: More than two unexcused absences will result in reduction of the grade by one whole grade. More than three unexcused absences are grounds for failure.

Excused absences: If you have an emergency or extenuating circumstance that requires you to miss class, please let me know the week beforehand or email me before class so that we can make a plan for you to complete the work. I may require a doctor's note or note from another faculty member depending on the situation. More than three excused absences will result in a reduction of the grade by one whole grade. More than four excused absences are grounds for failure.

Lateness: Lateness will factor into your grade. 3 late arrivals will be treated as an unexcused absence.

Reading: Reading is mandatory. Although I will not test you on it directly, you will be asked to engage in discussion by me and by your peers. If you have not read, it will count as a late arrival. Three instances will count as an unexcused absence.

Assignment Breakdown

- Your in-class and homework assignments will account for 75% your grade.
- Attendance, preparation, reading, and participation will be 10% of your grade. This includes willingness to engage in group work and class discussions, creative input, receptiveness to feedback, and attempting to work outside of your comfort zone.
- Your final bestiary entry (including main text, revised images, new images and content, design, and binding) will account for 15% of your grade.

A = sustained level of superior performance demonstrated in all areas of Course Requirements

B = consistent level of performance that is above average in a majority of the Course Requirements

C = performance that is generally average and Course Requirements are achieved

D = below average performance and achievement of the Course Requirements

F = accomplishment of the Course Requirements is not sufficient to receive a passing grade

V. POLICIES

PRATT INSTITUTE-WIDE INFORMATION

Academic Integrity Policy

At Pratt, students, faculty, and staff do creative and original work. This is one of our community values. For Pratt to be a space where everyone can freely create, our community must adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity.

Academic integrity at Pratt means using your own and original ideas in creating academic work. It also means that if you use the ideas or influence of others in your work, you must acknowledge them.

At Pratt,

- We do our own work,
- We are creative, and
- We give credit where it is due.

Based on our value of academic integrity, Pratt has an Academic Integrity Standing Committee (AISC) that is charged with educating faculty, staff, and students about academic integrity practices. Whenever possible, we strive to resolve alleged infractions at the most local level possible, such as between student and professor, or within a department or school. When necessary, members of this committee will form an Academic Integrity Hearing Board. Such boards may hear cases regarding cheating, plagiarism, and other infractions described below; these infractions can be grounds for citation, sanction, or dismissal.

Academic Integrity Code

When students submit any work for academic credit, they make an implicit claim that the work is wholly their own, completed without the assistance of any unauthorized person. These works include, but are not limited to exams, quizzes, presentations, papers, projects, studio work, and other assignments and assessments. In addition, no student shall prevent another student from making their work. Students may study, collaborate and work together on assignments at the discretion of the instructor.

Examples of infractions include but are not limited to:

- 1) Plagiarism, defined as using the exact language or a close paraphrase of someone else's ideas without citation.

- 2) Violations of fair use, including the unauthorized and uncited use of another's artworks, images, designs, etc.
- 3) The supplying or receiving of completed work including papers, projects, outlines, artworks, designs, prototypes, models, or research for submission by any person other than the author.
- 4) The unauthorized submission of the same or essentially the same piece of work for credit in two different classes.
- 5) The unauthorized supplying or receiving of information about the form or content of an examination.
- 6) The supplying or receiving of partial or complete answers, or suggestions for answers; or the supplying or receiving of assistance in interpretation of questions on any examination from any source not explicitly authorized. (This includes copying or reading of another student's work or consultation of notes or other sources during an examination.)

For academic support, students are encouraged to seek assistance from the Writing and Tutorial Center, Pratt Libraries, or consult with an academic advisor about other support resources.

Refer to the Pratt website for information on [Academic Integrity Code Adjudication Procedures](#).

Attendance Policy

General Pratt Attendance Policy

Pratt Institute understands that students' engagement in their program of study is central to their success. While no attendance policy can assure that, regular class attendance is key to this engagement and signals the commitment Pratt students make to participate fully in their education.

Faculty are responsible for including a reasonable attendance policy on the syllabus for each course they teach, consistent with department-specific guidelines, if applicable, and with Institute policy regarding reasonable accommodation of students with documented disabilities. Students are responsible for knowing the attendance policy in each of their classes; for understanding whether a class absence has been excused or not; for obtaining material covered during an absence (note: instructors may request that a student obtain the material from peers); and for determining, in consultation with the instructor and ahead of time if possible, whether make-up work will be permitted.

Consistent attendance is essential for the completion of any course or program. Attending class does not earn students any specific portion of their grade, but is the pre-condition for passing the course, while missing class may seriously harm a student's grade. Grades may be lowered a letter grade for each unexcused absence, at the discretion of the instructor. Even as few as three unexcused absences in some courses (especially those that meet only once per week) may result in an automatic "F" for the course. (Note: Students shall not be penalized for class absences prior to adding a course at the beginning of a semester, though faculty may expect students to make up any missed assignments.)

Faculty are encouraged to give consideration to students who have documentation from the Office of Health and Counseling. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities will continue to be provided, as appropriate.

Refer to the Pratt website for information on [Attendance](#).

Students with Disabilities

The instructor will make every effort to accommodate students with both visible and invisible disabilities. While it is advisable that students with disabilities speak to the instructor at the start of the semester if they feel this condition might make it difficult to partake in aspects of the course, students should feel free to discuss issues pertaining to disabilities with the instructor at any time. Depending on the nature of the disability, and the extent to which it may require deviations from standard course policy, documentation of a specific condition

may be required, in compliance with conditions established by the campus Learning Access Center, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who require special accommodations for disabilities must obtain clearance from the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. They should contact Elisabeth Sullivan, Director of the Learning Access Center, 718-636-3711.

Religious Policies

In line with Pratt's Attendance Policy, Pratt Institute respects students' requirements to observe days of cultural significance, including religious holy days, and recognizes that some students might need to miss class to do so. In this, or other similar, circumstance, students are responsible for consulting with faculty ahead of time about how and when they can make up work they will miss.

Health Office

Willoughby Hall 1st Floor
718 399 4542
health@pratt.edu

Learning / Access Center

ISC Building 1st Floor
718 802 3123
lac@pratt.edu

Counseling Office

ISC Building 3rd Floor
718 686 5356
therapy@pratt.edu