



Teaching & Learning Guide for: The Animal Rights Movement in Theory and Practice: A Review of the Sociological Literature

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Author's introduction

The animal rights movement has been described as one of the most neglected and misunderstood social movements of our era. However, social movement scholars are beginning to realise the political and moral significance of the world wide animal protection movement at a time when nature itself has been included in the specialist field of environmental sociology. Just as people are beginning to see that nature matters and is not separate from society, nonhuman animals (hereafter animals) too are increasingly perceived as worthy of our respect and consideration. The long-running animal protection movement which began in England in the 18th century is today better known as the animal rights movement. It is the men and women of this movement who, atypically for a social movement, are campaigning for a species that is not their own. The movement's theories and practices are important for what they do for animals and also because of what the animal rights controversy reveals about human beings.

Author recommends

Garner, Robert. 1998. *Political Animals: Animal Protection Policies in Britain and the United States*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

The book describes the progress made by the animal protection movement in the two countries where animal rights protests have been most prominent. The author presents a comprehensive examination of animal welfare policies in Britain and the US thus providing an informative comparative study of the movement's relationship with the state in these two countries. Garner's focus on policy networks corresponds to the sociologist's concept of social movement organizations. More than fifty such organizations balanced evenly between animal protectionists and animal-user industries are discussed in the book. *Political Animals* provides an excellent introduction to the politics of animal rights, although missing in the accounts are the voices of the animal activists and their opponents. In the final analysis, it is the meaning activists attribute to their cause that drives the movement, a fact which Garner tacitly acknowledges.

Imhoff, Daniel (ed) 2010. *The CAFO Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories*. Published by the Foundation for Deep Ecology with Watershed Media, Berkeley, LA: University of California Press.

The *Reader's* subject – concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) – covers most of the topics relevant to factory farmed animals and is divided into seven parts: (1) The pathological mindset of the CAFO; (2) Myths of the CAFO; (3) Inside the CAFO; (4) The loss of diversity; (5) Hidden costs of CAFO; (6) Technological takeover; (7) Putting the CAFO out to pasture. The acronym CAFO suggests a bland, mundane practice and is therefore a name which the editor believes should be replaced by the more accurate label “animal concentration camps”. The chapter titles indicate what is in store for the reader but the content is perhaps less confronting than the book’s companion photo-format volume of the same name. The reader is a very comprehensive survey of how living creatures are subjected to inhumane practices for their body parts by “corporate food purveyors” and is essential reading for anyone who cares about the future survival of all of the earth’s species.

Kean, Hilda. 1998. *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd.

In this attractive book, the historian Hilda Kean provides one of the most comprehensive and interesting surveys of the early animal protection movement in England, the birth-place of animal rights. Kean tells a compelling story of how and why people’s attitudes and practices involving animals changed over the past two centuries. She attributes these changes largely to the seemingly simple idea of “sight”, or how people were influenced by seeing for themselves how animals such as horses and dogs were ill treated in public spaces such as in streets and markets. Animals “out of sight” in vivisection laboratories and in abattoirs also came to the attention of the early animal protectionists, most of whom were women. The sight and spectacle of animal abuse turned hearts and stomachs once a light was shone on these everyday cruelties by the pioneers of animal rights in England. Kean’s book is nicely illustrated in keeping with the theme of *seeing* animals in their various relationships with humans.

Munro, Lyle. 2005. *Confronting Cruelty: Moral Orthodoxy and the Challenge of the Animal Rights Movement*. Leiden & Boston: Brill.

For most people animal cruelty is understood as unspeakable acts perpetrated by warped individuals mostly against dogs, cats, birds and sometimes horses. The animal rights movement seeks to broaden the issue of animal cruelty to include the vast numbers of animals that suffer and die in “the animal industrial complex” of intensive farming, recreational hunting and animal research and experimentation. The book draws on social movement theory to explain how and why an increasing number of people in the UK, US and Australia have taken up the cause of animals in campaigning against the exploitative practices of the animal-user industries. Essentially, the thesis is that animal abuse is constructed by the animal rights movement as a social problem (speciesism) on a par with sexism and racism. This is the first book in the Human and Animal Studies Series which currently lists about a dozen monographs published by Brill under the editorship of Kenneth Shapiro of the Society & Animals Institute in the US.

Noske, Barbara. 1989. *Humans and Other Animals: Beyond the Boundaries of Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.

As an anthropologist, Noske brings a different perspective to our relationship with nature, especially in the long process of animal domestication. Her chapter on “the animal industrial complex” shows how both human and nonhuman animals suffer within this structure of domination; for example, slaughterhouse work takes a heavy toll on the meat workers while the animals experience atrocious pain and misery on the assembly line of

mass execution. Noske's book is valuable for its broad treatment of animal-human relations in which she describes cultural, historical, structural and sociological aspects of these relations particularly in America and Australia.

Wilkie, Rhoda and Inglis David (eds.) 2007. *The Social Scientific Study of Nonhuman Animals: A Five-volume Collection – Animals and Society: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*. (Vols 1–5), London: Routledge.

This is a collection of 90 previously published articles and book chapters in approximately 2,000 pages on the social-scientific study of animals. The papers range from the earliest in 1928 on “the culture of canines” to the latest in 2006 on “religion and animals.” Three quarters of the papers were published in the last two decades and are derived from anthropology, sociology, psychology, geography, philosophy and feminist studies.

Because *Animals and Society* is based mostly on work derived from more than 12 different specialist journals, it has a claim to comprehensiveness; however, the editors mention topics that are not covered in the collection:

- (1) Ethical issues;
- (2) Animal welfare;
- (3) The characteristics of animal protectionists;
- (4) “Wilderness”;
- (5) The role of animals in the lives of children; and
- (6) The animal rights movement.

The main topics included in the collection provide a hint of its value to researchers:

Vol I. Representing the animal (Introduction and critical concepts in the social sciences)

Vol II. Social science perspectives on human-animal interactions (I):

- (1) Anthropology.
- (2) Geography.
- (3) Feminist studies.

Vol III. Social science perspectives on human-animal interactions (II):

- (1) Sociology.
- (2) Psychology.

Vol IV. Forms of human-animal relations and animal death – the dynamics of domestication:

- (1) Human-pet relationships.
- (2) Human-livestock relations.
- (3) Animal abuse and animal death.

Vol V. Boundaries and quandaries in human-animal relations:

- (1) Border troubles: are humans unique and what is an animal?
- (2) The legal, ethical and moral status of animals.
- (3) “The Frankenstein syndrome”: animals, genetic engineering, and ethical dilemmas.

NB. The above is a shorter version of my review in *Society & Animals*, 16. 91–93, 2008. I thank the journal for publishing the original review and for permission to include the above version in *Sociology Compass*.

Online materials

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s2159904.htm>

This is the story of a protest against the live animal export trade from Australia to the Middle East. The *7.30 Report* of 11 February 2008, was one of several media stories on the cruelty involved in the transport and slaughter of cattle, goats and sheep which outraged thousands of Australians when they witnessed footage shot by animal activists. The four minute video recording provides commentary and images that explain why the live animal export trade is a “hot cognition” issue in Australia and the UK. More recently, in June 2012, the callous treatment of cattle in a number of Indonesian abattoirs became a major media story that prompted public outrage and calls for an immediate and permanent ban on the trade.

<http://www.sharkwater.com/>

For many people, sharks are the most feared of all creatures and also the most misunderstood. They have been called “the mother of otherness” and as a result when they are hunted and killed there is very little concern for their welfare. This groundbreaking film explains the importance of sharks to the ocean and seeks to dispel the main stereotype of the shark as the creature from hell. The film is the work of Rob Stewart whose lifelong fascination with sharks was the catalyst for his mission to save the great predator from extinction.

<http://www.wspa-international.org/>

Regular internet users will probably have come across the advertisements from the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), particularly its campaign against the cruelty involved in bear dancing. The WSPA, as an international animal welfare organization, is one of a very select few animal and environmental organizations recognized by the United Nations. Another campaign which is featured on their website is “The Red Collar Campaign”, the motto for which is “Collars not Cruelty”. Viewers are warned that the two and a half minute video clip contains some confronting images of cruelty to dogs suspected of being infected by rabies. WSPA’s objective is to end the brutality inflicted unnecessarily on thousands of dogs perceived as a human health and safety risk; its solution to the problem of rabies is simple, cheap and effective.

<http://www.awionline.org>

The Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) is one of the most effective animal protection societies in the US. Its founder, the late Christine Stevens, worked most of her life as an advocate and lobbyist for animals. The AWI’s attractive website provides many useful features such as the AWI Quarterly and details of its seminal campaigns which include research animals, companion animals, farm animals, marine animals and wildlife. Since it was established in 1951, the AWI has had access to the US Congress and in gaining the attention of powerbrokers, the organization has succeeded in securing animal welfare improvements that are legislated in law, which owes much to the work of Christine Stevens.

<http://www.league.org.uk>

Hunting is a controversial issue in England which has developed into what is actually a class war between the aristocratic class and the “great unwashed”. Founded in 1924, the

League is virtually a household name in England. Its website contains some revealing film clips about the cruelty involved in the hunting of foxes, deer, rabbits and other animals in the English countryside. There is a great deal of information contained in the blogs and its FAQs as well as elsewhere on its website. Mention is also made of one of the latest hunting fads, “trophy hunting” which is apparently gaining popularity in some parts of the USA.

Topics for lectures & discussion

Part I: introduction and overview

What is the animal rights movement? Why do people campaign on behalf of a species that is not their own? How do individuals and social movements make their claims on behalf of nonhuman animals? These are some of the questions that would traditionally be posed in introducing the animal rights movement.

Reading

Munro, Lyle. 2012. ‘The Animal Rights Movement in Theory and Practice: A Review of the Sociological Literature’. *Sociology Compass* 6(2): 166–81.

Waldau’s recent book is a good introduction to what the movement is all about:

Waldau, Paul. 2011. *Animal Rights: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

There are three main discourses on animal rights which provide insights into our constructions of “the animal”: (1) Animals in this discourse are constructed as social problems (see Irvine, 2003 below for an example); (2) in this second discourse, animal defenders are demonised with labels ranging from “sentimental animal lovers” to “extremists” and even “terrorists” (see Munro, 1999 below for an example); (3) finally, the animal rights movement constructs our cruel treatment of animals as morally wrong and therefore deserving of the strongest condemnation (see Shapiro, 1994 below for an example). How and why people campaign against the exploitation of animals are issues explored in the following papers:

Irvine, Leslie. 2003. ‘The Problem of Unwanted Pets; A Case Study in How Institutions ‘Think’ About Clients’ Needs’. *Social Problems* 50: 550–66.

Munro, Lyle. 1999. ‘Contesting Moral Capital in Campaigns Against Animal Liberation’. *Society & Animals* 7: 35–53.

Shapiro, Kenneth. 1994. ‘The Caring Sleuth: Portrait of an Animal Rights Activist’. *Society & Animals* 2: 145–65.

Part II: animal cruelty

This section includes some important contributions to explaining cruelty to animals.

Agnew, Robert. 1998. ‘The Causes of Animal Abuse: A Social-psychological Analysis’. *Theoretical Criminology* 2: 177–209.

Munro, Lyle. 1997. ‘Framing Cruelty: The Construction of Duck-Shooting as a Social Problem’. *Society & Animals* 5: 137–54.

D'Silva, Joyce and John Webster. 2010. *The Meat Crisis: Developing More Sustainable Production and Consumption*. London and Washington: Earthscan.

Merz-Perez, Linda and Kathleen Heide. 2004. *Animal Cruelty: Pathway to Violence Against People*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Ltd.

Ascione, Frank. 2008. 'Children Who Are Cruel to Animals: A Survey of Research and Implications for Developmental Psychology.' Pp. 171–89 in *Social Creatures: A Human-Animals Studies Reader*, edited by Clifton, Flynn. New York: Lantern Books.

Winders, Bill and David Nibert. 2009. 'Expanding "Meat" Consumption and Animal Oppression.' Pp. 183–9 in *Between the Species: Readings in Human-Animal Relations*, edited by Arnold, Arluke and Clinton Sanders. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.

Part III: social movement theory and animals

There is a large literature on social movement theory with relatively little that refers to nonhuman animals. Some of those which do take up the issue are included below along with the following books that provide a general introduction to the study of social movements.

Lowe, Brian and Caryn Ginsberg. 2002. 'Animal Rights as a Post-Citizenship Movement'. *Society & Animals* **10**: 203–15.

Jasper, James. 2007. 'The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements.' Volume 4 Pp. 585–612 in *Social Movements: Critical Concepts in Sociology Volumes 1–4*, edited by Jeff, Goodwin and James Jasper. London and New York: Routledge.

Buechler, Steven. 2011. *Understanding Social Movements: Theories from the Classical Era to the Present*. Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers.

Cochrane, Alasdair. 2010. Chapter 6 'Marxism and Animals.' Pp. 93–114 in *An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory*, edited by Cochrane's. Basingstoke Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Einwohner, Rachel. 2002. 'Bringing the Outsiders in: Opponents' Claims and the Construction of Animal Rights Activists' Identity'. *Mobilization* **7**: 253–68.

Part IV: animal advocacy and activism: strategy and tactics

The above readings reveal to some extent at least *why* people campaign against animal cruelty. In this section's readings, the focus is on *how* animal activists run their campaigns in the streets (grassroots activism) and in the suites (organizational advocacy).

Carrie Freeman Packwood. 2010. 'Framing Animal Rights in the "Go Veg" Campaigns of US Animal Rights Organizations'. *Society & Animals* **18**: 163–82.

Paul, Elizabeth. 1995. 'Scientists' and Animal Rights Campaigners' Views of the Animal Experimentation Debate'. *Society & Animals* **3**: 1–21.

Upton, Andrew. 2010. 'Contingent Communication in a Hybrid Multi-Media World: Analysing the Campaigning Strategies of SHAC'. *New Media & Society* **13**: 96–113.

Munro, Lyle. 2001. *Compassionate Beasts: The Quest for Animal Rights*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Munro, Lyle. 2002. 'The Animal Activism of Henry Spira (1927–1998).' *Society & Animals* 10: 173–91.

Munro, Lyle. 2005. 'Strategies, Action Repertoires and DIY Activism in the Animal Rights Movement.' *Social Movement Studies* 4: 75–94.

Jasper, James. 1997. *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography and Creativity in Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Singer, Peter. 1998. *Ethics into Action: Henry Spira and the Animal Rights Movement*. Lanham MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Part V: academic/activist collaboration

Should academic teachers collaborate with activists in their campaigns? Like the church/state relations debate this is a controversial question since there are arguments both for and against academic involvement in political and social movements. Most of the readings in the original *Compass* article and below tend to see more benefits than costs to collaboration; however, higher education administrators don't like dissent and it is hard to imagine an academic holding down his or her job if they were seen to be working with animal activists on a particularly controversial campaign. It might be seen as acceptable if the collaboration was with the SPCA in the US or the RSPCA in Britain but not if the activists were affiliated with members of a radical animal liberation group. Furthermore, an academic-animal activist who campaigned say against the practice of animal experimentation at his or her university would surely be dismissed or at least threatened with dismissal unless they cut their ties with outside activists.

Burnett, Cathleen. 2003. 'Passion through the Profession: Being Both Activist and Academic.' *Social Justice* 30: 135–50.

Kleidman, Robert. 1994. 'Volunteer Activism and Professionalism in Social Movement Organizations.' *Social Problems* 41: 257–76.

Focus questions

- (1) Is the animal rights movement a genuine *social* movement when nonhuman animals are widely understood not to belong to society as it is generally understood?
- (2) How would you respond to the claim that cruelty to animals is our worst vice.
- (3) From your experience of seeing animal rights protests either on television or as the real thing, what do you think are the dominant emotions exhibited by the campaigners and their opponents?
- (4) From what you've read or heard or seen of social movement protests, do you believe the most *effective* strategy is non-violence or violence; and which of these two strategies do you think is more acceptable for the animal protection movement to follow and why?
- (5) Should academics who lecture on social movements practice what they preach? What are some of the main benefits and problems associated with academic analysts of social movements collaborating with grassroots activists?

- (6) The animal rights movement has been described as one of the fastest-growing social movements in the West – and one of the most controversial. What evidence is there for these claims?

Seminar/project idea

Please suggest an exercise to help bring the subject to life, appropriate either for undergraduate or graduate students, e.g. an assessment, a presentation, or other practical assignment.

Project idea or presentation

- (1) Compare and contrast the website of an animal welfare organization and an animal rights group in relation to (a) their objectives; (b) their most important campaign; and (c) their preferred overall strategies and tactics. Which of these organizations has the most potential in attracting new supporters and why? What advice would you give to these two organizations on how they might enhance their communicative effectiveness with the general public? (see Munro's *Compass* article for some clues).
- (2) Do an oral presentation on a radical animal liberation group such as the Animal Liberation Front or SHAC in which you describe its stated objectives, its seminal campaigns, its preferred tactics and its communication strategy as indicated by the group's website. Explain how effective the group is in terms of improving the lives of animals and how the activists justify the use of violence in their campaigns.

Note

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