

Feit Seminars – Spring 2025

Radical Bestiaries: Animals and Humans in the Atlantic World

Tuesdays, 11:20-2:05

Rick Rodriguez (English)

Elizabeth Heath (History)

In the middle panel of Hieronymus Bosch's "The Garden of Earthly Delights" humans and animals wildly coexist. This riotous image stands in stark contrast to that of The Great Chain of Being, where all creatures are neatly and vertically organized in subordination to humans. It is fair to say that the ideas that animate the visuals in The Great Chain of Being have come to dominate how we think and write about human history and culture and perhaps more importantly how that history and culture have been made, though not without opposition. We'll examine the ideas, beliefs, and practices underpinning these images in literary and historical texts, tracking their development from the 15th through the 19th centuries and to our own time. Doing so will not only yield a more complex appreciation of the entangled relations between humans and animals but also how these relations contributed to the making and unmaking of the Atlantic World.

The Art of Life Writing

Benjamin Gillespie (Communications/Women's and Gender Studies)

Rebecca Salois (Black and Latino Studies)

Wednesdays, 11:10-2:05

This course invites students into the lives of remarkable individuals through "life writing" (biography, autobiography, biographical fiction, docudrama, speech writing, and memoir) to discuss its meaning, aims, pitfalls, and possibilities as a genre. Through these intricate literary forms, students will gain an understanding of the art of storytelling and nuanced ways in which individuals choose to narrate their own lives and the lives of others. This seminar will combine approaches from Critical Race Studies, Ethnic Studies, Communication Studies, Theater and Performance Studies, and Gender Studies to explore the components of reflecting the self across a variety of writing styles. We will discuss such topics as: the relationship between fact and fiction; ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in biography; the significance of politics and historical context; narrative form; and the function of imagination. This course would be ideal for students interested in literature, history, cultural studies, and anyone interested in the rich tapestry of the human experience.