

Syllabus for The Archaeology of Pets and Other Animals 2024 (Sarah Wisseman, suwissem@gmail.com)

Summary: Man's historical relationship with animals goes far beyond using animal parts for food, clothing, and ornaments. This class will begin with trusted pets (e.g. dogs, cats, and birds). Later we will consider relationships with animals who serve specific functions (e.g. plowing, milking, transport, war) and odd companions (e.g. snakes, geese). When were animals first domesticated? Which animals ate and slept with their humans? Which animals achieved sacred status, either as gods or as symbols of transformation and the afterlife? Types of evidence will include pet cemeteries around the world, stables and other enclosures, bone and coprolite analyses, art, and literature.

Outline: The course will focus on archaeological evidence from the ancient Middle East, Greece, and Italy (the areas of the instructor's expertise), with occasional forays into the Americas and Asia. The material is arranged by 1) geographical location, and 2) culture and time.

Week 1: Introduction and types of evidence for human/animal relationships How did people exploit natural resources to feed, house, and clothe themselves in different environments (e.g. desert vs. forest or floodplain) through time? We will begin with animals of Mesopotamia, a polytheistic society located between two great rivers.

Sidebars: the earliest domesticated animal, the dog, the goat, cattle, and lions as symbols of power.

Week 2. How do archaeologists and scientists distinguish between wild and domesticated animal species in different parts of the world? Animals in ancient Egypt, another land dominated by a big river system and a polytheistic society in which animals play both practical and sacred roles. Sidebars: the cat, animal mummies and ancient beekeeping.

Week 3: Animals of Greece and Italy. Larger, semi-domesticated animals such as cows, goats, pigs, and transport and war animals such as horses and elephants. Ceremonial battles and gladiatorial combats. Sidebars: falcons, cicadas, and bears.

Week 4: Animals of South and North America (and other parts of the world as time permits). Human-animal relationships in prehistoric Illinois, home of another great river system. Sidebar: the horse. Summary and new directions.

About the Instructor:

Sarah Wisseman, Ph.D, is the retired Director of the UI Program on Ancient Technologies and Archaeological Materials (Illinois State Archaeological Survey, Prairie Research Institute). She received her degrees in Anthropology (Harvard University) and Classical and Near Eastern archaeology (Bryn Mawr College) after spending two years in Israel studying biblical archaeology. Her primary research areas are the science of Egyptian mummies, ceramic technology, experimental archaeology, and archaeometry. Sarah has taught numerous well-received classes at Olli. She also writes archaeological mysteries.

Post retirement website (books and paintings): www.sarahwisseman.com

Bibliography: *Check Sarah's blog sarahwisseman.blogspot.com each week for additional links

Books:

Nemet-Najat, Karen Rhea, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 1998

Llewellyn-Jones, Lloyd. *The Culture of Animals in Antiquity: A Sourcebook with Commentaries*. Milton Park, Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

Davis, Simon J.M. *The Archaeology of Animals*, 1987

Sanchez Villagra, Marcelo. *The Process of Animal Domestication*, 2022.

Scott, James C. *Against the Grain: A deep history of the Earliest States*, 2017.

Collins, Billie Jean. *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East.* , 2002

Articles:

Breier, Idan. "Humans and Wild Animals in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Interactions and Metaphors," *Anthrozoös*, 2018, 31:6, 657-672.

Arnold, Dorothea. "An Egyptian Bestiary," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, spring 1995.

Y. Hatziminaoglou, Y., Boyazoglu, J. "The goat in ancient civilisations: from the Fertile Crescent to the Aegean Sea," *Small Ruminant Research* 51 (2004) 123–129.

Videos:

[Zooarchaeology](#) (Australian video)

Salima Ikram on Egyptian [animal cults](#) and mummies

Websites:

[Ancient Humans](#) and pets

Cincinnati Classics Dept [Exhibit](#) on animal in the ancient Mediterranean

Prehistoric [pets](#)

Pets in ancient [Egypt](#)

Domestication [timetable](#)