

Carleton University
Winter 2026 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English Language and Literature

ENGL 1400A: Literature, Art, and Culture
Animals and Literacy

Prerequisites: Prerequisites additional credit for ENGL 1100, 1200, 1300, 1600, 1700, and FYSM 1004

Location: Online Scheduled

Instructor: Robin Norris
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***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

Course description:

Neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp argued that all animals, humans included, share several core emotions, which he labels using capital letters, and fundamental to them all is SEEKING. SEEKING drives both the search for resources, such as food and shelter, and the search for meaning. Through this course students will develop a more nuanced understanding of our own human consciousness, cognition, and SEEKING by reading two core texts about animals. These texts trouble (or reinforce) the difference between human and animal by depicting the quests of animals SEEKING both survival and meaning through the use of human habits such as language, literacy, and mythology.

Learning Outcomes:

Define and identify basic terms and concepts fundamental to animal emotion, emotional literacy, and psychological flexibility

Broaden our understanding of ‘literacy’ (cultural, emotional, etc.)

Experience reading and thinking critically about various genres

Analyze representations of animal use of language, mythology, and poetry

Develop a more nuanced understanding of human and animal cognition and emotion

Texts: Richard Adams, *Watership Down* \$22.00

Laline Paull, *The Bees* \$23.00

Evaluation: There will be a formally scheduled in-person final exam during the final exam period. I am currently working with Teaching and Learning Services to develop an alternative approach to the other assessments for this course. Requirements may include class participation, group work and roundtables, oral exams, a visit to your local public library, etc.