



Animals in Anthropology for IB Social Anthropology utilising the Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Anthropology

The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Anthropology (CEA) is a growing open-access teaching and learning resource. Its goal is to facilitate access to scholarship in Social Anthropology for experts and non-experts worldwide. All entries are written and peer-reviewed by leading academics. This document has been created to provide sign posting to how this resource might be used by those studying IB Social Anthropology.

Purpose of this document

This document provides five learning activities that support learning towards exam paper 2. It also offers some suggestions for applying this topic to an extended essay. The activities can be utilised individually, or as part of a program. Each activity requires 1-2 hours.

A contents table on page two outlines the activities that have been produced.

Preparation

Student would benefit from reading Matei Candea and Tom White's online encyclopaedia entry which offers a comprehensive overview of Animals within anthropology. These activities will also be best approached by students who have already read (or at least, are a substantial way into) an ethnography that incorporates animals. The encyclopaedia entry provides a good overview for selecting possibilities.

Example ethnography options

Parreñas, Juno. *Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation* (2018) Duke University Press. (Good for Health and Illness, Production, Exchange and Consumption).

Stewart, Michael. *The Time of the Gypsies*. (1998) Routledge. (Good for Belonging, Conflict).

Willerslev, Rane. *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism and Personhood among the Siberian Yugakhirs*. (2007). University of California Press. (Good for Movement, Time and Space, Classifying the World)

International Baccalaureate Curriculum Links

Part 2: Engaging with ethnography.

The anthropological study of animals provides possibilities for making connections across several of the key concepts and areas of inquiry.

Areas of inquiry:

Group 1 Classifying the World

Key concepts:

Symbolism, Belief and Knowledge, Social Relations, Power.



Page	Activity	Objective	Time
3	Comprehension of the Encyclopaedia Entry.	Read the encyclopaedia entry and begin to understand and engage with the key concepts.	The entry will take around 1 hour to read. The exercise will take 45 minutes to complete
4	Conceptual Understanding of Symbolism	Students will be able to understand the concept of symbolism, and critically assess its utility for understanding human/animal relationships	1-2 hours.
5-7	Debate: "Examining the behaviour of Caribou is none of anthropologists business"	Students will consider the political, methodological and theoretical challenges of studying as part of ethnographic studies of other people.	1 hour reading (could be homework) 1 hour small group/whole class work.
8	Key Terms	Students will understand the importance of four key terms to contemporary anthropological interest in animals; natureculture, trust, dualism and personhood. They will also evaluate how well these terms apply to particular ethnographic examples.	30 minutes internet based research (could be homework), 1 hour small group/whole group class work.
9-10	Exam and extended essay preparation	Students will be able to apply their learning to general anthropological discussions and broad exam-type questions.	Exam practice: 1 hour. Extended Essay Prompts: 10 mins reading, to prompt future work.



Figure 1 Credit Hannah Jones McVey



Comprehension of the Encyclopaedia Entry.

Type of Work: Individual

Activity Objective: Reading the encyclopaedia entry and begin to engage and understand key concepts.

Time Allocated: The entry will take around 1 hour to read. The exercise will take 45 minutes to complete.

This entry is particularly useful for students who already have a sense of key theoretical terms, such as 'structuralism' and 'functionalism,' since Candea and White show how different theoretical positions have drawn on human-animal relations in different ways. The questions below will help students to draw key conceptual points from the entry, even if they have little prior theoretical knowledge.

Read the [encyclopaedia entry on Animals](#) by Matei Candea and Thomas White, and answer the following questions:

1. Edmund Leach says that animals are 'good to think with.' Name one anthropologist whose work investigates the ways people can use animals as a thinking-device for creating meaning. In no more than three sentences, describe that anthropologist's approach to the way people 'think with' animals.
2. What is different about approaches which see animals as 'good to think with' and those that employ 'multispecies ethnography'?
3. Some anthropologists have insisted that in order to study human-animal relationships, we need to be willing to take other peoples' ideas about animals seriously. Name one anthropologist who pursues this strategy, and write a paragraph outlining their findings.
4. Some anthropologists have highlighted the way humans and animals mutually depend on one another to live in the way that they do. Name one anthropologist who takes this approach, and write a paragraph outlining their findings..
5. Candea and White conclude that ethnography can be 'elevated' 'complemented' or 'expanded' to include non-human animals. What does each of these terms mean?

MATEI CANDEA

Dr Candea is currently the PI on the Risking Speech project, a five-year comparative study of the ethics, epistemics, politics and material infrastructures of freedom of speech in a range of locations in and beyond Europe. His first post-doctoral work explored the conceptual and material relations between humans and other animals in behavioural biology, with a particular focus on researchers who study meerkats.

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THOMAS WHITE

Dr White is a lecturer at Cambridge University. His PhD thesis consists of a study of human-animal relations in the context of environmental change.





Conceptual understanding of Symbolism

Type of work: Individual study

Activity Objectives: Students will be able to understand the concept of symbolism, and critically assess its utility for understanding human/animal relationships.

Time allocated: 1-2 hours

Suggested reading:

Leach, E.R. 2000. Animal categories and verbal abuse. In *The essential Edmund Leach*, vol. 1 (ed.) S. Hugh-Jones & J. Laidlaw, 322-43. New Haven: Yale University Press.

+ contemporary ethnography that includes animals, see page one of this guide for suggestions.

A symbolic approach towards human-animal relationships involves studying the way that humans can hold different sorts of meanings about animals.

1. How might the study of symbolic meaning help anthropologists to explain social cohesion? (if you have studied structuralism, interpretivism, or any other symbolic theory, include this in your answer).
2. "Symbols do not hold meaning on their own, but operate as part of symbolic systems" What might this mean? Explain through reference to a particular example.
3. What sorts of similarity and difference are emphasised by symbolic accounts? Consider
 - a) The sorts of comparisons that a symbolic account can make between different human groups
 - b) The sorts of comparisons that a symbolic account makes between humans and animals.
4. Why might a symbolic approach be limited in understanding human-animal relationships? Describe an ethnographic example that would be obscured by a symbolic account.

Additional group discussion or extension question to help connect the concept of symbolism to other ethnographic examples.



Figure 2: Credit Matei Candea

- Can anybody think of something that is symbolically important within their own life, or within the ethnographies they have read?
- What can the concept of symbolism help us to understand? And what might be left out of a symbolic account?
- What might the concept of *materiality* offer? (opportunity here to link to previous conceptual understanding of materiality, or introduce a new theme for future lessons)



Discussion

'Explaining the behaviour of caribou is none of [anthropologists'] business'; their concern is rather with the hunters' direct experience of encounters with animals' (Ingold 2000: 14).

Type of work: Small and larger group work

Time: 1 hour reading, 1 hour preparing and conducting discussion.

Objective: Students will consider the political, methodological and theoretical challenges of studying animal as part of ethnographic studies of other people.

Divide students into four groups. Each group is to tackle one of the following texts (1 hour).

Stépanoff, C. 2017. The rise of reindeer pastoralism in Northern Eurasia: human and animal motivations entangled. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23, 376-97

Nadasdy, P. 2007. The gift in the animal: the ontology of hunting and human-animal sociality. *American Ethnologist* 34(1), 25-31

Kopnina, H. 2017. Beyond multispecies ethnography: engaging with violence and animal rights in anthropology. *Critique of Anthropology* 37(3), 333-57

Ingold, T. 2000a. Culture, nature, environment: steps to an ecology of life. In *The perception of the environment: essays on livelihood, dwelling, and skill*, 13-26. London: Routledge.

Work through the following (1 hour)

1. Discussion in small groups, in which all group members have read the same text. Work as a group to summarize the key points, and elect a spokesperson/spokespersons, for relaying back to the whole group. (15 minutes)
2. Each group to explain their text to the class, particularly in relation to the question; "How should anthropologists study animals?". Questions from other students are encouraged after each presentation. (20 minutes)
3. Return to small group discussion. Give groups Ingold's statement, above. Do students agree with Ingold? (10 minutes)
4. Whole class discussion: Is Ingold's statement correct, incorrect, or correct in certain instances? (15 minutes)



Key Terms

Type of work: Small group work

Activity Objective: Students will understand the importance of four key terms to contemporary anthropological interest in animals; natureculture, trust, dualism and personhood. They will also evaluate how well these terms apply to particular ethnographic examples.

Time Allocation: 30-45 minutes prep (with internet access) + 55 minutes class work.

Work together in groups of 2-4. Each group should be assigned one of the terms below, and be allowed the opportunity to conduct some internet-based research around their term. This may be completed as individual homework. (minimum 30 minutes). The encyclopaedia entry is a good place to start.

Terms:

- Naturalcultural (Donna Haraway)
- Trust
- Dualism
- Personhood

In pre-assigned groups, prepare the following: (20 minutes)

1. An explanation of what the term means
2. Some ideas about how this term may be important for anthropological studies of human-animal relationships
3. A discussion as to how well this term may or may not apply to a particular ethnographic example.

Feedback to class (35 mins)

Share group findings with the whole class. After each presentation, allow time for questions from the class directed towards the presenting group.



Figure 3 New Zealand. Credit Hannah Jones McVey



Essay and Exam preparation

Type of work: Individual Study

Activity Objective: Students will be able to apply their learning to general anthropological discussions and broad exam-type questions.

Time Allocation: 1 hour

Write an essay in response to one of the following questions. Use ethnographic evidence of contemporary, real world examples, in the answer. Remember to include the date/place of the ethnographic fieldwork you reference, as well as the name of the author, and the date and title of the publication.

1. What can multispecies anthropology teach us about the relationship between knowledge and belonging?
2. When we study knowledge, what do we learn about power?
3. What does a symbolic approach illuminate and obscure, when studying human relationships with other animals?
4. Critically compare two anthropological approaches towards personhood (use approaches to human-animal relationships in your answer).

TIPS: These questions are broad and general and can be quite intimidating. But you do not need to come up the final, complete, and correct answer to these questions. You need to use them as ways to think about the specific things that you have read about in ethnography. If you are unsure how to tackle a question, as a starting point, come up with two ethnographic examples that demonstrate something relevant to the question, and then compare them with one another, relating back to the question throughout.

TOP TIP: For an excellent answer, can you think about how anthropologists *ought to* think about the key concepts (eg materiality, identity, power, change) in order to best understand human lives? What is good or not so good about the approach of the anthropologist's you have read?



Figure 4: Lao Elephant Sanctuary. Credit Hannah Jones McVey



Extended essay and ethnographic research topics

Some students may wish to pursue human-animal relationships as a topic for their extended essay or ethnographic research. Some possible titles/prompts are below. Candea and White's encyclopaedia entry can be used to help you to select appropriate reading and organise your approach.

1. Human-Animal relationships are always human-human relationships too – what might this mean?
2. What are the most important challenges facing multispecies ethnographic methods?
3. If we want to understand human-animal relationships, we have to understand power. Do you agree?
4. Can animals be persons? If so, when, how, and given what sorts of theories of personhood?

Or, to come up with your own topic of enquiry you may like to consider:

What did you find surprising about the ethnographies you read?

How does anthropological approaches to human-animal relationships compare with the approaches you have come across within other disciplines?



Figure 5 Sao Paulo Carnival, Brazil. Credit: Hannah Jones McVey