

American Studies/Interdisciplinary Studies 385
The Dividing Lines: Pit bulls, Identity, and Community
Fall 2013- Tu/Th 10:00 a.m.-11:15 a.m.
215 Woodruff Library

Contact Info

Instructor: Dr. Donna Troka

Email: dtroka@emory.edu (I will respond within 48 hours)

Phone: 404.727. 5791

Office hours by appointment

Course Overview

Pit bulls have been imbued with a variety of characteristics in American culture. They have been “nanny dogs” that watched over small children, much like Petey in the Little Rascals. In hip hop culture, they have symbolized urban masculinity as they do on DMX’s album cover for “Grand Champ” and Missy Elliott’s album cover for “This is not a Test.” And on rural farms and in urban backyards in the south, through fighting and breeding respectively, pit bulls also have become money makers.

In the first part of this course will begin to untangle the journey pit bulls have taken over the last century. We will ask how we might think differently about pit bulls and the communities from which they come if we inject the popular discourse with a critical consciousness about race, class, gender, and community development.

In the second part, we will take what we learn in class and connect it to the work being done by Lifeline Animal Project, a *no kill shelter* in Avondale Estates, Georgia that was recently awarded contracts to run both DeKalb and Fulton County Animal Services (*who both have over 60% kill rates, the majority of which are pit bulls*).

In the third part of the class, with support from a teaching mini-grant from the Center for Community Partnership (CFCP), we will take what we have learned and apply it in various classrooms throughout the Atlanta Public School systems. Here we will begin to think through how we can take these histories and theories and transform them into actions that can help transform local communities’ understandings of animal welfare in general and pit bulls more specifically.

Ultimately, we will investigate what a holistic approach that recognizes that all dogs, especially pit bulls, are part of larger communities can teach us. How can this approach utilize social justice strategies to build coalitions and transform society while reducing the number of neglected, abused, and stray pit bulls? And how can you take the strategies and approaches that Lifeline Animal Project is implementing and apply them to your local environment?

Required Reading

All readings are available on our Blackboard site.

Netiquette & Discussion Expectations

This is an academic course and I expect students to behave online (in our blog or other virtual meeting spaces) as though they would in a face to face class. I also understand that conducting parts of our class online means we don't always know the *tone* of the person speaking, so please keep that in mind as you post. If you are afraid your tone will be misunderstood, include your tone in words. For example (*tone: frustrated but working on it*). Flaming and disrespect will not be tolerated. Please see our "ground rules" if you have questions. Please only use emoticons if you absolutely have to as many people see them as not part of "professional" or "academic" writing. Again, if you have questions about this, please ask me.

On participating in community partnerships

Part of your job in this class is to go out into the community and develop relationships with people outside of the university. Please remember that you are representing Emory, our class, and yourself when you are out in the world, so I ask that you please act with respect and maturity and try to avoid swearing around the kids. If you have any concerns or problems with any of our community partners, please bring them to me immediately and we will work through it together.

Course Goals and Assignments

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate skill in critical thinking, writing, oral presentation, and group discussion.
2. Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate introductory scholarship on race, gender, class, community development, and pit bulls/animal welfare.
3. Engage with digital scholarship and use it to develop a public conversation about theories of identity, community development, and animal welfare.
4. Develop projects in collaboration with our community partners.
5. Demonstrate skill in mapping using GIS technology.
6. Present and explain the outcomes of your community partnership project with Atlanta Public Schools.

Assessment

Class Participation	15 points
Mapping project	20 points
Blogs & comments	30 points
Comm. Part. Project	25 points
Presentation	10 points
TOTAL	100 points

Class participation (15 points)

This class is based on the educational premise that knowledge is constructed through an (inter) active process rather than absorbed passively. Therefore, the format for the course will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and collaborative research with an emphasis on dialogue and sharing of perspectives. Attendance is crucial to your academic performance; you are expected to be an active and informed participant in all class discussions. In order to do this you must have assigned readings completed by the date on which they first appear on the syllabus. **If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate**, including any altered assignments, project topics, or announcements that were made. So it may be prudent to make a new friend early on. You can miss **two** classes without penalty, after that you will lose participation points.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping Project (20 points)

In groups you will develop virtual maps using GIS of Fulton and DeKalb County. On these maps you will mark all pet food stores (box stores like Pet Co, PetSmart, and Pet Supermarket as well as boutique stores like Intown Pet Works or East Atlanta Pet Supply), veterinarian offices, and pet shelters. This map will help us (and Lifeline Animal Project) to better understand which communities in Atlanta have access to animal care resources and which ones do not.

Blog Entries (30 points; 5 blogs @ 5 points each + 5 comments @ 1 point each)

Five times during the semester you are expected to write a blog entry in response to the readings. Five times during the semester, you are also expected to post a comment in response to one of your classmate's blog posts. **You must post your blog entry and comment by 9pm Sunday night so that everyone in the class has time to read it before our class on Tuesday morning.** You can blog more than five times (I love a robust virtual discussion!) but you will only receive credit for five posts.

A word on blog comments: These comments don't have to be long, but they should be substantive (i.e avoid simply saying, "I totally agree" and instead tells us WHY you agree). Please also keep comments respectful and professional. This doesn't mean you can't disagree with people, it just means you have to make an argument for *why* you disagree with them rather than simply calling them a knucklehead.

Community Partnership Projects (25 points)

For this assignment you will divide into three groups: Team Elementary, Team Middle School, and Team High School.

- **TEAM ELEMENTARY:** (*STEM Club at Toomer Elementary School & Whitefoord Elementary School*): develop a workshop on how to approach a dog, how to care for a dog, dog behavior, and classifying dogs. Grades K-5.

- *TEAM MIDDLE SCHOOL: (Afterschool All Stars at King Middle School):* As part of the enrichment program, work with middle school students to develop creative projects that engage the themes of our class. Grades 6-8.
- *TEAM HIGH SCHOOL (Broadcast/Video Production Class at Maynard Jackson High School):* work with high school students to develop public service announcements and a documentary about our class. Grades 9-12.

Final presentation (10 points)

At the end of the semester you will be asked to present your community partnership project to your classmates and to our community partners. Here you will be asked not only to describe your project but also to connect it to the larger context of the course.

Late Assignment Policy

Please note that readings and assignments are due on the dates designated in the syllabus. If an emergency arises and you make arrangements with me ahead of time, I may agree to accept a late assignment. If I do not agree or if you have not made prior arrangements with me, you will receive a lower grade. Be aware that my definition of “emergency” includes such things as “major cardiac surgery” and “being in labor” and not “I am hung over” or “I have another paper to write.”

Plagiarism

Please read and abide by the Emory University honor code. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please discuss them with me **BEFORE** handing in your work. For more on this go to: www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/students/honor.html

ADA and Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability, you may receive extra assistance from the Office of Disability Student Services located at 110 Administration Building, their phone number is 404.727.1065. Also, please contact me if you have any type of disability and we can discuss how it may or may not affect your participation in this class.

I reserve the right to make changes in this schedule if the need arises. Necessary changes will be announced via email.

Schedule of Assignments / Activities

Th 08/29 First Day of Class

[Animal Welfare, Pit bull History, Breed Specific Legislation, and Dog fighting]

Tu 09/03 Rudy, Kathy. "Introduction" "What's Behind Animal Advocacy" & "The Love of a Dog"

Th 09/05 Delise, Karen. "The Function of Dogs in 19th Century America"
 "The Media Attacks a 'Breed': the Pit Bull" "Pseudoscience and Hysteria
 Triumph" &
Team DeKalb blog due
Team Fulton comment due

Tu 09/10 Delise, Karen. "The Real Causes for Dog Attacks"

Capp, Dawn. "Breed Discrimination: Death to them All."

Gladwell, Malcom. "Trouble Makers: What Pit Bulls Teach Us About Profiling"

Stratton, Richard. "The Fancy" & "The Game"

Team Fulton blog due
Team DeKalb comment due

Th 09/12 Kirk, R.G. "White Monarch and the Gas-House Pup."

Fighting Dogs

Stratton, Richard. "Of Breaksticks, Pedigrees, and Treadmills."

Panel Discussion in class

Tu 09/17 **Field Trip: visit Lifeline during class**

Th 09/19 **First visit: Atlanta Public Schools (regular class cancelled)**

Tu 09/24 Guest Lecture: Michael Page on GIS

Th 09/26 Evans, Rhonda. "Dogfighting: Symbolic Expression and Validation of Masculinity."

Ortiz, Francesa. "Making the Dogman Heel: Recommendations for Improving the Effectiveness of Dog fighting Laws" (1-26) & (66-75)
Team DeKalb blog due
Team Fulton comment due

Tu 10/01 Piquero, Alex R. "Race, Punishment, and the Michael Vick Experience"

Harris-Perry, Melissa. "Michael Vick, Racial History, and Animal Rights."

Toure. "What if Michael Vick Were White?"
Team Fulton blog due
Team DeKalb comment due

[What Does Race, Class, and Gender Got to Do with It?]

Th 10/03 Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. "Racial Formations"

Forman, Tyrone and Amanda Lewis. "Racial Apathy and Hurricane Katrina."
Team Fulton blog due
Team DeKalb comment due

Tu 10/08 Lewis, Amanda. "'What Group? Studying Whites and Whiteness in the Era of 'Color-Blindness'"

Rothenberg, Paula S. "How White People Can Serve as Allies to People of Color in the Struggle to End Racism."
Team DeKalb blog due
Team Fulton comment due

Th 10/10 Lorber, Judith. "The Social Construction of Gender"

Shaw, Susan and Janet Lee. "Learning Gender in a Diverse Society"

Tu 10/15 **Fall Break- No Class**

Th 10/17 **Fall Break- No Class**

Tu 10/22 **GIS Assignment due**
Second Visit to Lifeline

Th 10/24 **Second visit: Atlanta Public Schools (regular class cancelled-except for team Maynard Jackson)**

Tu 10/29 Brewer, Mark and Jeffrey Stonecash. "Inequality and Opportunity in America: Growing Differences."

Th 10/31 Mantsios, Gregory. "Class in America: Myths and Realities"

Class Matters website on *New York Times*
Team DeKalb & Fulton blog due
Team Fulton & Team DeKalb comment due

[Thinking About Community Development]

Tu 11/05 Phillips, Rhonda and Robert Pittman. "An Introduction to Community Development"

Th 11/07 **Third visit: Atlanta Public Schools (regular class cancelled-except for team Maynard Jackson)**

Tu 11/12 Gomez, Marisela. "Introduction" & "Race and Separation in Historic East Baltimore: Yesterday and Today"
Team Fulton blog due
Team DeKalb comment due

Th 11/14 Gomez, Marisela. "Who Benefits and Suffers From Rebuilding Abandoned Communities?"
Team DeKalb blog due
Team Fulton comment due

Tu 11/19 Stone, Rebecca and Benjamin Butler. Conclusion to "Exploring Power and Race"

Th 11/21 Watch "Beyond the Myth"

Tu 11/26 Finish watching "Beyond the Myth" + discussion

Th 11/28 **Thanksgiving- No Class**

Tu 12/03 Practice final presentations
Community Partnership projects due

Th 12/05 Final Presentations (during regular class time)
tentatively in the Jones Room, Woodruff Library

Tu 12/10 Last Day of Class