



FALL 2026 COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Number: Law 637-001

Course Title: Animal Law Seminar

Credit Hours: 2

Grading Mode: Final paper

Meeting Day/Time: Thursday, 4pm to 6pm

Meeting Mode: Weekly in-person class

Exam Day/ Time: No exam

Final Exam Mode: Final paper

Prerequisite(s): Not applicable

Corequisite(s): Not applicable

Instructors: Rebecca Cary and Margie Robinson

Contact Information:

rcary@gmu.edu

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Overview

This seminar offers an examination of litigation, legislation and regulatory efforts on behalf of animals at the local, state, and national level. The course will address the historical status of animals in the law; the current application of laws to captive animals, wildlife, and farm and other domesticated animals; legislative efforts and citizen initiatives to strengthen animal protection laws; the role of international treaties and agreements concerning trade in animals and animal products; and the limitations on implementation and enforcement of animal protection laws. Emerging areas of animal law, and the impacts of free speech, religious expression, and other constitutional protections for animal protection advocates and animal use industries will be explored. The course will also address legal constraints on animal advocacy, and the movement to obtain legal recognition of the rights of animals.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Understand the interests of animal use industries and animal protection advocates
- Identify historical precedents, current issues, and common causes of action in animal law
- Evaluate and think strategically through the benefits and negative outcomes of a legal action, advance public interest causes and/or changes in the law
- Develop an original thesis and support it with legal research and persuasive writing

Readings & Supplements

Assigned cases/articles are available through the links below, Westlaw/Lexis, or will be provided via email in advance of class.

Suggested: C. Sunstein, ANIMAL RIGHTS (2005)

Suggested: D. Favre, ANIMAL LAW: WELFARE, INTERESTS, AND RIGHTS (2008)

Grading Policies

Evaluation and Attendance

Students will receive a single final course grade based upon a completed final research paper. Because this is a seminar, class attendance and participation are an important component of a successful course, and students are expected to be prepared for substantive discussions of the assigned material. Pursuant to George Mason Law School policy, final grades may be adjusted up or down by a single increment (e.g., from a B+ to an A-) based upon participation.

Final Paper Content and Deadlines

The final paper may be written on any topic in animal law. Law student papers typically identify a specific, unresolved legal problem and offer a solution, but they can also present ideas for new doctrinal frameworks, approaches, or developments. This is a scholarly writing—the student's own analysis and conclusions should be thoroughly developed in the paper. The paper should be well researched and include scholarly and legal sources that are properly attributed and cited. Those authorities should substantiate the student's arguments, but the paper should present the student's own perspective. A successful paper thoroughly defines the issue to be analyzed, recognizes structural, policy, political and other implications of the matter, and

persuasively argues the author's perspective while addressing any obvious contrary arguments.

No generative AI product is permitted to be used to research or write any part of the paper. **Students must include the following certification at the end of their papers, accompanied with their electronic signature:** "I certify that I have not used generative artificial intelligence to research or write any portion of this paper. Signed: [insert electronic signature]."

Proposed paper topics are due on or before October 15, 2026, and outlines must be submitted on or before October 29, 2026. We encourage you to check in with us during the course to ensure that you are working towards a quality end product.

Final research papers are due on or before December 11, 2026. They should be at least 20 pages of typed, double-spaced text, with one-inch margins, and 12-point font. Papers may be longer than 20 pages but may not exceed 30 pages. All papers must be paginated at the bottom of each page, and sources must be cited in footnotes rather than end notes. Please put your name at the top of the first page.

Faculty may not grant extensions of the deadline for final papers beyond the last date of the exam period, and all authority in this matter is delegated to the Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs. Requests and reasons for needing a deadline extension must be presented, with appropriate documentation, to the Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs.

Classroom Policies

Attendance

Attendance: Per AR 3-1.4, "maintenance of matriculation requires regular class preparation, participation and attendance, registration in the course of study required for the student's program (full-time or part-time), successive registration for each fall and spring term of each academic year until study is completed, and compliance with all other relevant requirements."

Absences: Per AR 4-1.1, "if a student is absent for any reason for more than 20 percent of the sessions of a course, the student is not eligible for credit in that course. A student who is not present for at least 75 percent of a session of the course is absent from that session."

Artificial Intelligence

Strict Use Policy: The use of generative AI tools is not permitted for any coursework in this course. Unauthorized use will be treated as a violation of academic standards.

See "Final Paper Content and Deadlines" above for more information.

Class Recordings Prohibited

Pursuant to Academic Regulation 4-2.2, no portion of a class session or an examination may be preserved by means of any audio or video recording device. Any exceptions to this policy must be expressly permitted in writing by both Professors Cary and Robinson.

Class Assignments

This syllabus sets forth the basic reading assignments for each class session. The syllabus will likely be supplemented some weeks with additional materials as animal law is a rapidly evolving subject area. Every effort will be made to discuss the topics and assignments as indicated in the syllabus. However, exact dates for discussion of particular assignments may change as the semester progresses, and there may be occasions where the subject from one class will carry over to the next. Students will receive advance notice, when possible, of any variance from the schedule in the syllabus.

Course Schedule & Assignments

Week 1:

Date: August 20

Topic: Introductions and overview of course requirements. Outline of major topic areas of the course. Discussion of potential topics and structure for research papers. Overview of historical treatment of animals in the law and animal rights theory.

Assignments:

- C. Sunstein, Intro.: *What Are Animal Rights?* ANIMAL RIGHTS (2005)
- J. Lovvorn, Animal Law in Action: *The Law, Public Perception, and the Limits of Animal Rights Theory as a Basis for Legal Reform*, 12 ANIMAL L. 133 (2006)
- *Knox v. MSPCA*, 425 N.E.2d 393 (Mass.App.Ct. 1981)
- *Lock v. Falkenstine*, 380 P.2d 278 (Okla.Crim.App. 1963)
- *City of Rolling Meadows v. Kyle*, 494 N.E.2d 766 (Ill.App. 1986)

Week 2:

Date: August 27

Topic: Animals and the legal system – Foundations of animal law, anti-cruelty provisions in criminal codes as a reflection of community norms, and criticisms of criminal justice-based animal advocacy.

Assignments:

- *People v. Voelker*, 658 N.Y.S.2d 180 (N.Y.City Crim.Ct. 1997)
- *People v. Thomason*, 84 Cal.App.4th 1064 (Cal.App.2.Dist. 2000) *Oliver v. City of Anaheim*, 490 Fed. App'x. 890 (9th Cir. 2012)
- *State v. Kuenzi*, 332 Wis. 2d 297 (Wis. Ct. App. 2011)
- *Martinez v. State*, 48 S.W.3d 273 (Tx.App.4d. 2001)
- *State v. Nix*, 355 Or 777 (Or. 2014)
- Justin Marceau, *Beyond Cages: Animal Law and Criminal Punishment*, Yale Law, Ethics and Animals Program Lecture Series (Sept. 23, 2019), available at [Vimeo](#)

Week 3:

Date: September 3

Topic: Private causes of action – Exploration of various causes of action available to animal advocates, and the limitations of judicial review of civil claims and remedies to protect animals.

Assignments:

- *Hammer v. American Kennel Club*, 1 N.Y.3d 294 (N.Y. 2003)
- *ALDF v. Cal. Expo. and State Fairs*, 239 Cal.App. 4th 1286 (Cal.App. 1st Dist. 2015)
- *Seeton v. Pennsylvania Game Comm'n*, 594 Pa. 563 (Pa. 2007)
- *ALDF v. Woodley*, 181 N.C.App. 594 (N.C. App. 2007)

Week 4:

Date: September 10

Topic: Animals and the legal system – Valuation: How much is an animal, or a human relationship with an animal, worth? Discussion of monetary recovery and other judicial remedies for harms to humans relating to abuses of animals, with a focus on emotional distress torts.

Assignments:

- *Plotnick v. Meihaus*, 208 Cal.App. 4th 1590 (Cal.App. 4th 2012)
- *Rabideau v. City of Racine*, 243 Wis.2d 486 (Wisc. Sup.Ct. 2001)
- *Strickland v. Medlen*, 397 S.W.3d 184 (Tex. 2013)
- *S. Gay, Companion Animal Capital*, 17 ANIMAL LAW 77 (2011) *Burgess v. Taylor*, 44 S.W.3d 806 (Ky. Ct.App. 2001) *Barrios v. Safeway*, 97 So.3d 1019 (La. Ct.App., 2012)

Week 5:

Date: September 17

Topic: Standing – Review of animals' status as legal objects and lack of legal personhood. How advocates build a case to establish legal standing.

Assignments:

- C. Sunstein, *Can Animals Sue?*, ANIMAL RIGHTS (2004) 251-261
- *Sierra Club v. Morton*, 405 U.S. 727 (1972)
- *Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555 (1992)
- *Food & Drug Admin. v. All. for Hippocratic Med.*, 602 U.S. 367 (2024)
- *HSUS v. United States Postal Service*, 609 F.Supp.2d 85 (D.D.C. 2009)
- *New Eng. Anti-Vivisection Soc'y v. United States Fish & Wildlife Serv.*, 208 F. Supp. 3d 142 (D.D.C. 2016)

Week 6:

Date: September 24

Topic: State and federal legislative processes for enacting animal protection laws – issues in legislative drafting, lobbying, citizen initiatives and referenda and grass roots activities

Assignments:

- Standing exercise
- *Commonwealth v. Looper*, Civ. No. 00850, 2009 WL 1272625 (Ky.App. May 8, 2009)
- *California Prop 2: A Watershed Moment for Animal Law* 15 ANIMAL L. 149 (2009)
- *Cramer v. Brown*, 2012 WL 13059699 (C.D. Cal. 2012)
- [Watch: oral argument](#) in *Assoc Des Eleveurs De Canards, Et Al v. Kamala Harris*, No. 15-55192 (9th Cir. 2015)

Week 7:

Date: October 1

Topic: Laws and regulations concerning companion animals, including puppy mills and breeding, sales, and adoptions.

Assignments:

- Skim *Animal Welfare Act*, 7 U.S.C. § 2131, *et. seq.*
- *Doris Day Animal League v. Veneman*, 315 F.3d 297 (3rd Cir. 2003)
- *Associated Dog Clubs of N.Y. State, Inc. v. Vilsack*, 75 F. Supp. 3d 83 (D.D.C. 2014)
- *Budd v. Quinlan*, 19 Misc. 3d 66, 860 N.Y.S.2d 802 (App. Term 2008)
- *Cahill v. Blume*, 8 Misc. 3d 1004(A), 801 N.Y.S.2d 776 (Civ. Ct. 2005)
- Kimberly Kindy, [They Got a Puppy — and a Nearly 200 Percent Loan](#), Washington Post (Sept. 30, 2022)

Fall Break – No Class October 8

*****Research paper topics are to be submitted on or before October 15, 2026 by email**

Week 8:

Date: October 15

Topic: Laws and regulations concerning farm animals; including laws prohibiting particular forms of confinement, and providing for humane slaughter and transport

Assignments:

- *Levine v. Connor*, 540 F.Supp.2d 1113 (N.D.Cal. 2008)
- *National Meat Ass’n v. Harris*, 565 U.S. 452 (2012)
- *Nat’l Pork Producers Council v. Ross*, 598 U.S. 356 (2023)
- Watch: oral argument in [Ross](#) (from 1:49-2:10; Jeff Lamken arguing for Intervenor)

- Optional: *NJSPCA v. NJDOA*, 196 N.J. 366 (N.J.Sup.Ct. 2008)

Week 9:

Date: October 22

Topic: Laws and regulations concerning wildlife, including protection of threatened and endangered species, along with marine mammals.

Assignments:

- *TVA v. Hill*, 437 U.S. 153 (1978)
- *HSUS v. Zinke*, 865 F.3d 585 (D.C. Cir. 2017)
- *AWI v. Kreps*, 561 F.2d 1002 (D.C. Cir. 1977)
- *HSUS v. Locke*, 626 F.3d 1040 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Chiara Eisner & Nick McMillan, [*'That's a Bloodbath': How a Federal Program Kills Wildlife for Private Interests*](#), NPR (Oct. 10, 2024),

*****Research paper outlines are to be submitted on or before October 29, 2026 by email**

Week 10:

Date: October 29

Topic: Laws and regulations concerning animals used in research and experimentation, performing animals and animals used in other exhibitions.

Assignments:

- *Taub v. State*, 296 Md. 439 (Md.Ct.App. 1983)
- Francis Collins, *NIH Will No Longer Support Biomedical Research on Chimpanzees* (Nov. 17, 2015), <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/who-we-are/nih-director/statements/nih-will-no-longer-support-biomedical-research-chimpanzees>
- *ALDF v. Glickman*, 204 F.3d 229 (D.C. Cir. 2001)
- *Hagan v. Feld Entertainment, Inc.*, 365 F.Supp.2d 700 (E.D.Va. 2005)
- *Hill v. Coggins*, 867 F.3d 499 (4th Cir. 2017)
- *Handout* on rodeos, bull fighting, animal racing, zoos and circuses, and uses of animals in television and movies

Week 11:

Date: November 5

Topic: Constitutional protections of, and limitations on, animal protection advocacy – First Amendment freedoms of speech and religion, libel and defamation, invasion of privacy, and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act

Assignments:

- *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520 (1993)
- *United States v. Stevens*, 559 U.S. 460, 130 S.Ct. 1577 (2010)
- *Ouderkirk v. PETA*, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 29451 (E.D.Mich. 2007)
- *Dorman v. Satti*, 678 F.Supp. 375 (D.Conn. 1988)
- *State v. Miner*, 556 N.W.2d 578 (Minn.Ct.App. 1996)
- *Animal Legal Def. Fund v. Herbert*, 263 F.Supp.3d 1193 (D. Utah 2017)

Week 12:

Date: November 12

Topic: Current developments in animal law. Guest speakers are frequently invited to participate in this session. *Reading may be assigned in advance of class.*

Week 13:

Date: November 19

Topic: Student presentations, discussion of issues and ideas, review and feedback

Assignment:

- Be prepared to give a brief presentation on research paper topic

*****Final research papers are to be submitted on or before December 11, 2026.**

Student Resources

[Antonin Scalia Law School Academic Regulations](#)

[GMU Common Course Policies Addendum](#)

[Mason Square Services](#)

[Mason Square Police](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room 110

Emergency - Dial 911

Escort Services - 703-993-8070

Dispatch – 703-993-2810

[Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#)

Mason Square Sexual Assault Services:

Van Metre Hall, Room 222D

703-993-8186

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If a student wishes to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. Students may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

[Mason Square Clinic](#)

Van Metre Hall, Room B102

703-993-2831

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Disability Services](#)

[University Life](#)