

**UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI VERONA**  
**Scuola di Dottorato in Studi Umanistici**

***Bestiarium***  
**Human and Animal Representations**  
International PhD Conference  
28-30 September 2016

The PhD School of Humanities of the University of Verona is organising the international trans-disciplinary Conference “Bestiarium. Human and Animal Representations” which will take place from the 28th to the 30th September 2016.

From Aristotle's philosophy to the Medieval Bestiaries, from the ancient fables to the works of artists such as Damien Hirst, Joseph Beuys and Bill Viola, through George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Die Verwandlung* by Franz Kafka, the animal and its various representations have always played a lead role in the cultural production of human kind. For example, from the XVI century onwards Aesop's fables and the oriental tales collected in *Panchatantra* and in its Arab version *Kalila e Dimna* have influenced a number of essays and short stories, such as those by Agnolo Firenzuola (*La prima veste dei discorsi degli animali*), Anton Francesco Doni and Jean de la Fontaine.

In the last decades, however, new achievements in fields such as Ecology and Cognitive Ethology have created the social need to deeply reconsider the ethical status of animals. From a theoretical point of view, these peculiar social demands have imposed an interpretative shift in the Humanities, leading to the so-called “Animal Turn” in cultural studies (Harriet Ritvo, “On the Animal Turn”, 2007). This theoretical turn raised some fundamental questions about human-animal relationships, otherness, the ontological status of animals and the meaning of humanity and animality. As a result, the traditional epistemological categories of Humanities have been called into question. Indeed, if on the one hand the contribution of scholars such as Jacques Derrida (*L'Animal que donc je suis*, 2006), Giorgio Agamben (*L'Aperto: l'uomo e l'animale*, 2002), Cora Diamond (*The Realistic Spirit*, 1991), and J. M. Coetzee (*The lives of Animals*, 1999) has allowed to dismiss the conception, typical of the Enlightenment, according to which “animals were mere blank pages onto which human wrote meaning” (Erica Fudge, “The History of Animals”, 2009), on the other hand, it has demonstrated a substantial inability to abandon the anthropocentric point of view which has always characterized the discourse on animals.

Hence the need to overcome the traditional tendency to read the animal merely as a symbol, a metaphor or an allegory, whose only purpose is that of representing and negotiating human power relations of race, class, and gender. This new perspective allows the adoption of a critical attitude capable of shortening the ontological distance between the human and the animal, referring to a phenomenological dimension in which the two elements are different, but equally possible, modes of corporeality of a particular form of animality.

The international trans-disciplinary Conference “Bestiarium. Human and Animal Representations” intends to give a contribution to this debate by focusing on texts and discursive practices which reveal the epistemological and cultural dynamics structuring the representation of the animal.

The human-animal relationship has always been characterised by a wide net of interactions and exchanges. The aim of the Conference will be to rethink the very nature of humanity through animality - considering all the various meanings that this term can acquire - in order to highlight diversity and to find a new sense of the human and of the animal.

What are the ontological, phenomenological and ethical differences emerging from the comparison of the human with the animal? How does the distinction between humanity and animality change over time and in different cultural contexts? How can we rethink the categories of otherness, agency, embodiment and experience in the human-animal relationship? How are the mechanisms of empathy triggered through the textual representation of the animal? How does the interpretation of a text change when assuming a non-anthropocentric point of view on the representation of the animal? Which linguistics strategies are deployed when speaking of animals and what do they reveal?

Given the strong interdisciplinary character of the reflection on the animal and its representation, the Conference is open to scholars of different disciplines such as Italian, ancient Greek, Latin, and foreign literatures and philology, philosophy, linguistics, history and anthropology, art, cinema and new media.

We invite contributions which study, discuss and promote, among others, the following issues:

- Human-animal relationship
- Animalising the human and humanising the animal
- Animal bodies and human bodies
- Discursive significance of animal metaphors, symbols and tropes
- Textual animals
- Animal societies and Human societies
- Animals and visual culture
- Language and animality

The Conference is addressed to PhD students and researchers who have no more than 5 years post-Doctoral experience.

The time limit for each presentation is 20 minutes, followed by discussion. Please submit an abstract of 300 words (title included) in .pdf format by April 15, 2016 to the following address:

[convegno.animali@ateneo.univr.it](mailto:convegno.animali@ateneo.univr.it)

All submissions should be written in English or Italian, and be prepared for anonymous review. Name, affiliation, and research field should appear only in the text of the e-mail. All submissions will be acknowledged and acceptance of abstracts will be communicated by June 15, 2016. Contributions in English will be preferred.

The publication of the Conference proceedings is expected.

**Organising Committee:** Mariaelisa Dimino, Alessia Polatti, Roberta Zanoni.

**Scientific Committee:** Giulia Anzanel, Stefano Bazzaco, Francesca Dainese, Francesco Dall'Olio, Damiano De Pieri, Mariaelisa Dimino, Anja Meyer, Damiano Migliorini, Silvia Panicieri, Giulia Pellegrino, Alessia Polatti, Simone Pregolato, Marco Robecchi, Giacomo Scavello, Tania Triberio, Roberta Zanoni.