

# Cross-Species Relationality and Communication

Rutgers ❖ ANTH 375 ❖ Fall 2020 ❖ Schulthies

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Virtual Office Hours: 2-3pm Tue/Wed, by appt

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

How does cross-species communication work? What kinds of social lives do plants, primates, animals, bacteria and fungi lead in relation to humans, and humans in relation to them? This course brings anthropological perspectives to these questions, and considers how language and communicative ideologies mediate plants-primates-people-animal-fungi-bacteria relationality. Throughout the course, we will focus on the sometimes hidden, sometimes explicit role of language and semiotics in shaping relations between humans and nonhumans – shaping them in concrete, material ways that alter how they coexist on the same planet. The course will involve a mix of readings, such as ethnographies discussing human and nonhuman interaction in particular cultural contexts; popular journalism, literary texts, documentary and popular films, scientific articles, and various kinds of Internet sites and postings. In addition, we will arrange individual field trips to experientially analyze contexts of human-nonhuman sociality: a botanical garden, an ecological preserve, a virtual herbarium tour, a farm/zoo, and restaurant in New Jersey.

One of the key goals of this course is to encourage you to consider, on specific terms, through concrete cases, how language and other sign systems are used all around you in ways that shape material realities. This means, for example, that linguistic signs in use affect the kinds of relations that are possible, in certain circumstances, between humans and nonhumans – privileging some, prohibiting others, rendering some visible, erasing others -- but also, by extrapolation, all relations between human beings and the world we live in. To this end, you will be responsible, throughout the semester, for helping me make the course relevant to your everyday lives by bringing in materials and issues from beyond the course and examining their connection to course ideas and sources. This will culminate in a final research project, in which you will conduct research into a current issue of your choosing – one in which you consider how signs (such as language) shapes relations between humans and nonhumans.

The course is organized around key themes: topics or methods that have structured histories of nonhuman-human relations and yet are also of particular salience now, to current political debates about nonhumans and the uses humans make of them. Such themes include:

- discourses about diversity (bio, cultural, and linguistic) and boundary-making/erasing work;
- sociality models/ideologies/assumptions shaping interactions between humans/nonhumans;
- plant/animal signaling and the human sensorium;
- ethnobiology and regimes of naming;
- colonialism and the history of transplantations and migrations;
- multispecies ethnographies and the perspectives they offer environmental crises;
- “biopiracy” and conflicts over indigenous environmental knowledge;
- genetically modified species and critiques of modern food production.

## INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES: The key goals of this class are

1. To gain a deeper knowledge of the semiotic theories of mediation
2. To learn how to critically engage anthropological theories and texts
3. To enhance your understanding of ethnography as a writing genre and analytical method
4. Improve writing and presentation skills

## CLASS MEETINGS

1. This course will meet **synchronous remote on Tuesdays from 9:15am-12:15pm EST.**
2. All reading materials are available on **Sakai** or through the **library as ebooks.**
3. I expect you to read the course materials before class.

# Cross-Species Relationality and Communication

Rutgers ❖ ANTH 375 ❖ Fall 2020 ❖ Schulthies

4. Because this course was originally designed for fieldtrips, we have a three-hour block for our meetings. Since we cannot meet in person for fieldtrips, **you will need to find a suitable location substitute near you for the fieldtrip (we can talk about ideas the first day of class)**. I will provide fieldtrip instructions, which you will need to complete before we meet online to discuss the fieldtrip experience.
5. *On the days when we have a field trip scheduled, we will meet online for about 1.5 hr for discussion.*
6. **I will send zoom meeting information to your university email the day before our scheduled class time. Please let me know if you prefer a different email for class correspondence.**

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:

- You will need a computer with a webcam and microphone and an internet connection for class.
- Please visit the [Rutgers Student Tech Guide](#) page for resources available to all students. If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email Dean of Students [deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu) for assistance.

## FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

- If you are facing other financial hardships, please visit the Office of Financial Aid at <https://financialaid.rutgers.edu/>.

## SAS CORE CURRICULUM GOAL: SCL

Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

## ASSIGNMENTS

- Participation: regular attendance for scheduled virtual meetings, reading preparation, field trips, and presentations are required, unless arranged in advance with me. 30 pts
- Summary and discussion questions: you will need to submit a paragraph summary of the readings, a discussion question, and respond to a classmate's question each week. 15 pts
- Observation Assignment 1: interviewing biota. 5 pts
- Observation Assignment 2: fieldnotes "reading" multispecies landscapes. 5 pts
- Video Essay: working with two or three classmates, prepare a three-minute video essay (visuals and narration) related to Keck's ethnography (see Sakai for details). 15 pts
- Final project proposal: At mid-semester, you must submit a one-page proposal that discusses your final project and how it relates to course themes. It must include a brief dialogued review of the relevant scholarly literature and bibliography. 5 pts
- Final project: you will be required to produce a final project on a topic of your choosing that relates to course themes. All projects will have two modality components: a 4-page single-spaced written paper, and one of the following: an in-class oral presentation, a 3-minute video essay, project poster, or visual art presentation. Papers will be re-written twice: once under a peer review process, and another after the professor's review. 35 pts (5 pts 1<sup>st</sup> draft, 5 pts 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, 10 pts presentation, 15 pts final)

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS

The **reading load is heavy**, and the expectations I have of your performance will be high. On average, you should expect to put in two to three hours of work outside of our meetings for every hour of meeting time. You are expected to **complete the assigned readings before class**, to **attend all class zoom meetings**, and to **come prepared to actively engage** with course material by thinking critically and creatively about the assigned texts and the issues they raise. **Regular attendance is required**. In fact, class participation and attendance will comprise a portion of your grade. *If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.* In cases where you must miss class for periods longer than one week, you will as per university policy be directed to see a Dean of Students for assistance *to help verify these circumstances*. **If you are a person who does not readily participate in class, I encourage you to meet me during my virtual office hours, and we can devise other ways for you to have input into class discussions.**

# Cross-Species Relationality and Communication

Rutgers ❖ ANTH 375 ❖ Fall 2020 ❖ Schulthies

Since the material may be somewhat unfamiliar, it might appear quite difficult at first. In particular, you'll have to get used to a fair amount of technical terminology. We will go over definitions in class, and things should get easier as you become more accustomed to the language, style of argument, and intellectual issues in the readings. Please bring questions on material that you do not understand to class or to my office hours. **The only "bad" questions are the ones that you don't ask.**

On occasion, there will be films assigned for you to view. This will be available through the library website. Please make arrangements to complete all field trips as those are central to the class. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. The dates and material in this syllabus may be subject to change, so listen carefully to announcements and check Sakai frequently for changes.

Please note also the following policies:

- **Late submission is not accepted without prior permission of the instructor.**
- **Online Assignment Submission:** All assignments should be submitted online. For ease of reference and grading, include your name in the beginning of your document title when you submit on Sakai. For example: Schulthies Project Proposal ANTH 375.docx
- **Special arrangements** for students with documented needs or disabilities should be made well in advance of assignment due-dates. Follow the policies outlined here <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/> and discuss this with me as soon as possible.

## REQUIRED READINGS

There are three required books for this course, **which are ebooks on the Library website** should you not wish to purchase them. All other course readings will be pdfs or weblinks posted to Sakai.

- ❖ Keck, Frédéric. 2020. *Avian Reservoirs: Virus Hunters and Birdwatchers in Chinese Sentinel Posts*. Duke University Press.
- ❖ Kimmerer, Robin Wall. 2013. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Press.
- ❖ Parreñas, Juno Salazar. 2018. *Decolonizing extinction: The work of care in orangutan rehabilitation*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

**Rutgers Policies: Please make yourself aware of the student code of conduct, especially the academic code of conduct.** <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/university-code-of-student-conduct>

**Plagiarism:** In preparing assignments a student often needs or is required to employ outside sources of information or opinion. All such sources should be listed in the bibliography. *Citations and footnote references are required for all specific facts that are not common knowledge and about which there is not general agreement.* New discoveries or debatable opinions must be credited to the source, with specific references to edition and page even when the student restates the matter in his or her own words. Word-for-word inclusion of any part of someone else's written or oral sentence, even if only a phrase or sentence, requires citation in quotation marks and use of the appropriate conventions for attribution. Please follow the American Anthropological Association style guide in the bibliography and in-text referencing. Paraphrasing or summarizing the contents of another's work is not dishonest if the source or sources are clearly identified (author, title, edition, and page), but such paraphrasing does not constitute independent work and may be rejected by the instructor. Students who have questions about accurate and proper citation methods are expected to consult Rutgers' policies on plagiarism.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Reading assignment to be completed before class	Before Class Assignments	Class Activity
Sept 1 <b>Nonhuman blindness: Flora</b>	Del Tredici, Peter 2014 <a href="#">The Flora of the Future</a> . Places Journal, April	Be able to access <a href="#">flowering plants</a> and <a href="#">grasses fieldguides</a> on Sakai	Botanic landscape walk (originally conducted)

# Cross-Species Relationality and Communication

Rutgers ❖ ANTH 375 ❖ Fall 2020 ❖ Schulthies

<p><b>and Fauna in Social Sciences</b></p> <p><b>Planthropology and Ethology</b></p>	<p>Raffles, Hugh, L. Shani, R. Goldstein, and K. Wentworth 2015 Writing/power/story: Why and how to do ethnography of non-human beings and things. <a href="#">Anthro Happenings, Cultural Anthropology</a>.</p> <p>Wanderer, Emily 2016 <a href="#">Planticide: Killing Badly Behaved Plants</a>. <i>Platypus: The CASTAC Blog</i>, August 24</p> <p>Gagliano, Monica, John C. Ryan, and Patricia Vieira, eds. 2017 <i>The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature</i>. University of Minnesota Press, vii-xvii. (<i>Sakai</i>)</p> <p><b>Optional:</b> Raffles, Hugh 2002 Intimate Knowledge. <i>International Social Science Journal</i> 54(3): 325-335</p> <p>Wandersee, James and Elizabeth Schussler 2001 Toward a Theory of Plant Blindness. <i>Plant Science Bulletin</i> 47(1): 2-9</p>		<p><i>outside the RAB and BIO buildings)</i></p> <p><b>Instructions on Sakai</b></p> <p>Videos: <i>Intelligent Trees, Urban Nature, Hartigan on horse culture</i></p>
<p><b>Sept 15</b></p> <p><b>Interspecies Communicability</b></p>	<p>Hartigan, John 2020 Into the Field: Techniques of Observation. In <i>Shaving the Beasts: Wild Horses and Ritual in Spain</i>. University of Minnesota Press, selections. (<i>Sakai</i>)</p> <p>Kohn, Eduardo 2013 <i>How Forests Think. Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 27-33. (<i>Sakai</i>)</p> <p>Raffles, Hugh. 2007 The language of the bees: an interview with Hugh Raffles. <a href="#">Cabinet Magazine 25</a>.</p> <p>Schulthies, Becky 2020 Phytocommunicability and Cross-Species Sociality. <i>Ethnos</i>, 1-8 (<i>Sakai</i>)</p> <p><b>Optional:</b> Boke, Charis 2019 Plant Listening: How North American Herbalists Learn to Pay Attention to Plants. <i>Anthropology Today</i> 35(2):23-27.</p> <p>Myers, Natasha</p>	<p>Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class</p> <p><i>Spend 20 minutes interviewing, observing and interacting with a plant, fungus, or animal; keep notes of your observations, post on Sakai, and prepare to share your experiences in class.</i></p>	<p>Film: <i>Smudge</i></p> <p>Videos: <a href="#">Prairie Dogs Language</a></p>

# Cross-Species Relationality and Communication

Rutgers ❖ ANTH 375 ❖ Fall 2020 ❖ Schulthies

	<p>2015 Conversations on plant sensing: Notes from the field. <i>NatureCulture</i> 3:35-66 (Sakai)</p> <p>Raffles, Hugh 2010 <i>Insectopedia</i>. Pantheon Books, 171-200. (Sakai)</p> <p>Schulthies, Becky 2019 Partitioning, Phytocommunicability, and Plant Pieties. <i>Anthropology Today</i> 35(2):8-12. (Sakai)</p>		
<p><b>Sept 22</b></p> <p><b>“Reading” Landscapes as nonhuman-human histories</b></p>	<p>Carney, Judith 2009 <i>Botanical Gardens of the Dispossessed. In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa’s Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 123-138. (Sakai)</p> <p>Davis, Diana 2007 <i>Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa</i>. Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, selections (Sakai)</p> <p>Briggs, Charles L. 2020 From Progressive Extractivism to Phyto-Socialism: Trees, Bodies, and Discrepant Phytocommunicabilities in a Mysterious Epidemic. <i>Ethnos</i>, 1-21 (Sakai)</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Hartigan, John 2015 <i>Plant Publics: Multispecies Relating in Spanish Botanical Gardens</i>. <i>Anthropological Quarterly</i> 88(2):461–486 (Sakai)</p> <p><b>Optional:</b></p> <p>Descola, Philippe 2013 <i>Beyond nature and culture</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 32-56. (Sakai)</p> <p>Mathews, Andrew S. 2018 <i>Landscapes and Throughscapes in Italian Forest Worlds: Thinking Dramatically about the Anthropocene</i>. <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> 33(3): 386-414.</p>	<p>Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class</p> <p><i>Complete before class: Botanical garden or park field trip (originally Rutgers Garden field trip)</i></p> <p><b>Instructions on Sakai</b></p>	<p><i>Share your plant-human history observations with class.</i></p> <p><i>Brainstorm multispecies project, proposal due October 6</i></p>
<p><b>Sept 29</b></p> <p><b>Sociality theories: Representational</b></p>	<p>Hartigan, John 2015 <i>Aesop’s Anthropology: A Multispecies Approach</i>. Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 7-11, 25-29 (Sakai)</p> <p>Cook, Guy</p>	<p>Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class</p> <p><i>Bring to class a plant-based metaphor</i></p>	<p><i>Film: Mama Coca</i></p> <p><i>Share sociality metaphor with class.</i></p>

# Cross-Species Relationality and Communication

Rutgers ❖ ANTH 375 ❖ Fall 2020 ❖ Schulthies

	<p>2004 <i>Genetically Modified Language: The Discourse of Arguments for GM Crops and Food</i>, 1-6 (pages 77-90 are optional).</p> <p>Allen, Catherine. 2002. <i>The Hold Life Has: Coca and Cultural Identity in an Andean Community</i> (1-9, 20-21, 102-113, 184-195, 242-3).</p> <p><b>Optional:</b> Smith, Benjamin 2012 "Language and the frontiers of the human: Aymara animal-oriented interjections and the mediation of mind." <i>American ethnologist</i> 39 (2): 313-324.</p>	<p><i>about sociality we can analyze (see Hartigan)</i></p> <p><i>Get Kimmerer reading assignment</i></p>	
<p><b>Oct 6</b></p> <p><b>Sociality theories: Plant Kin</b></p>	<p>Kimmerer, Robin Wall 2013 <i>Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants</i>. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Press, 3-59, 105-140, 150-151, 156-201 (library ebook)</p> <p><b>Optional:</b> Baker, Janelle Marie 2020 Do berries listen? Berries as indicators, ancestors, and agents in Canada's oil sands region. <i>Ethnos</i>, 1-22</p> <p>Shebitz, Daniela J. and Robin W. Kimmerer 2004 Population trends and habitat characteristics of sweetgrass, <i>Anthoxanthum nitens</i>: integration of traditional and scientific ecological knowledge. <i>Journal of Ethnobiology</i>, 24:93–111.</p>	<p>Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class</p> <p><i>Complete before class: Foraging Field Trip (originally Livingston Ecological Preserve field trip)</i></p> <p><b>Instructions on Sakai</b></p>	<p><i>Get Kimmerer reading assignment</i></p> <p><i>Intelligent Trees documentary</i></p>
<p><b>Oct 13</b></p> <p><b>Sociality theories: Plant Personhood</b></p>	<p>Kimmerer, Robin Wall 2013 <i>Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants</i>. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Press, 205-240, 254-300, 303-309, 341-347, 360-383 (library ebook)</p> <p><b>Optional:</b> Govindrajan, Radhika. 2015 "The goat that died for family": Animal sacrifice and interspecies kinship in India's Central Himalayas. <i>American Ethnologist</i> 42 (3): 504-519.</p> <p>Mardar, Michael 2013 Should Plants Have Rights? <i>The Philosophers' Magazine</i> 62: 46-50.</p>	<p>Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class</p>	<p><b>Multispecies Sociality Project Proposal Due</b></p> <p><i>Guest lecture by Jared Rosebaum</i></p> <p><i>Get Keck reading assignment</i></p>

# Cross-Species Relationality and Communication

Rutgers ❖ ANTH 375 ❖ Fall 2020 ❖ Schulthies

<p><b>Oct 20</b> <b><i>Kinship Unbound: nonhuman-human sociality (and pandemics)</i></b></p>	<p>Keck, Frédéric. 2020 <i>Avian Reservoirs: Virus Hunters and Birdwatchers in Chinese Sentinel Posts</i>. Duke University Press. (<i>library ebook</i>)</p>	<p>Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class</p> <p><i>Complete before class: Farm, zoo, animal preserve fieldtrip (originally SEBS animal farm tour)</i></p> <p><b>Instructions on Sakai</b></p>	<p><i>Brainstorm topic of video essay</i> <i>Due October 27</i></p> <p><i>Get Keck reading assignment</i></p>
<p><b>Oct 27</b> <b><i>Kinship Unbound: nonhuman-human sociality (and pandemics)</i></b></p>	<p>Keck, Frédéric. 2020 <i>Avian Reservoirs: Virus Hunters and Birdwatchers in Chinese Sentinel Posts</i>. Duke University Press. (<i>library ebook</i>)</p>	<p>Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class</p> <p><i>Share video essay</i></p>	<p><b>Group video Essay Due</b></p>
<p><b>Nov 3</b></p> <p><b><i>Economic Sociality: Emplacing Plants, Animals and People through European Colonial Classification</i></b></p>	<p>Schiebinger, Londa 2004 <i>Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting</i>. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 194-225. (<i>Sakai</i>)</p> <p>Helmreich, Stefan 2014 <i>Homo microbis: The human microbiome, figural, literal, political. Thresholds</i>, 52-59.</p> <p>Kirksey, Eben 2015 <i>Species: a Praxiographic Study. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i> 21:758-780</p> <p>Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt 2011 <i>Friction: An ethnography of global connection</i>. Princeton University Press, 155-170 (<i>Sakai</i>)</p> <p><i>Skim the website:</i> <a href="#">Kew State of the World's Plants</a></p> <p><b>Optional:</b> Hartigan, John <i>Species. The Multi-species Salon.</i> <a href="#">weblink</a></p> <p>Miller, Teresa 2016 <i>Living Lists: How the Indigenous Canela Come to Know Plants through Ethnobotanical Classification. Journal of Ethnobiology</i> 36(1): 105-124. (<i>Sakai</i>)</p> <p>Hayden, Cori 2003 <i>When Nature Goes Public: The Making and Unmaking of Bioprospecting in Mexico.</i></p>	<p>Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class</p> <p><i>Find the scientific name of a plant, animal, fungi, microbe of your choice. What can you learn about the history this being's "scientific" name? Bring what you've learned to share in class.</i></p>	<p>In-class <i>Virtual Chrysler Herbarium Field Trip</i></p> <p><i>Films: Embrace of the Serpent, Botanical Explorers, Botany of Desire</i></p>

# Cross-Species Relationality and Communication

Rutgers ❖ ANTH 375 ❖ Fall 2020 ❖ Schulthies

	Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1-15, 125-157 ( <i>Sakai</i> )		
<b>Nov 10</b>  <i>Economic Sociality: Fungi Fetishes</i>	Faudree, Paja 2015 Tales from the Land of Magic Plants: Textual Ideologies and Fetishes of Indigeneity in Mexico's Sierra Mazateca. <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i> 57(3):838–869 ( <i>Sakai</i> )  Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt 2015 <i>The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins</i> . Princeton University Press, 1-25 ( <i>Sakai</i> )  West, Paige Spectacular. <i>The Multispecies Salon</i> . <a href="#">weblink</a>	Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class	
<b>November 17</b> <i>Primate sociality: Decolonizing Extinction</i>	Parreñas, Juno Salazar. 2018. <i>Decolonizing extinction: The work of care in orangutan rehabilitation</i> . Durham NC: Duke University Press. ( <i>library ebook</i> )	Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class	<i>Guest Lecture Alyssa Moldawer</i>  <i>1st draft of your project paper due to me</i>
<b>Nov 24</b> <i>Primate sociality: Decolonizing Extinction</i>	Parreñas, Juno Salazar. 2018. <i>Decolonizing extinction: The work of care in orangutan rehabilitation</i> . Durham NC: Duke University Press. ( <i>library ebook</i> )	Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class	
<b>Dec 1</b>  <i>Local Logics</i>	Hartigan, John 2020 <i>Shaving the Beasts: Wild Horses and Ritual in Spain</i> . University of Minnesota Press, conclusion. ( <i>library ebook</i> )  Gray, Margaret 2013 <i>Labor and the Locavore: The Making of a Comprehensive Food Ethic</i> . Berkeley CA: University of California Press, selections. ( <i>Sakai</i> )  Class review	Reading summary due by 3pm the day before class	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Draft of Paper Due for peer review</i>
<b>Dec 8</b>	<b>Presentations, Poster, Video</b>  <i>Share ppt, poster, video, art installation of your project.</i>	<b>Dec 11</b>  <i>Final project paper due on Sakai</i>	