

## The Rhetoric of Human-Animal Relations

*Workshop at the University of Oslo, May 29-30, 2012*

With rhetoric, we make realities. And despite the complaint that humans are “a species which has at last been isolated” (Berger), the realities that humans create with rhetoric are *not* exclusively human. The purpose of this workshop is to investigate the rhetoric that reaches beyond the human sphere.

In some of its various definitions, rhetoric refers either to “the art of persuasion,” to a continuous process of “identification,” or to an “articulation” that tries to fix meaning in a world where no such meaning is given. In all cases, it appears that rhetoric is something humans perform with and on each other. But if humans are perhaps the only species capable of rhetoric, they are certainly not the only species *affected* by it. In fact, rhetoric creates the space within which our everyday practices with other beings take place. Rhetoric thus connects the philosophical “question of the animal” with our everyday interactions with animals; in both cases, the salient issue is that – and how – words and other rhetorical means have consequences.

In this workshop, we will focus on questions like these: How do we use rhetoric to form, understand, explain, discuss, ponder, justify, challenge, and criticize human-animal practices? How do we rhetorically create, uphold, and challenge the norms that are supposed to guide our behavior towards nonhumans? How do visual and verbal rhetorics shape human-animal relations in theory as well as in practice? Finally, how does interacting with animals inspire development of other rhetorics (olfactory, tactile, performative, etc.)?

We invite scholars engaged in rhetorical studies, broadly defined, to present current work on how human-animal spaces of action are created with rhetorical means. We welcome contributions from a variety of academic disciplines and approaches, geographical locations, and fields of practice. The event will take place at the University of Oslo, Norway.

*Submit an abstract (max. 300 words) of your paper to [kristian.bjorkdahl@sum.uio.no](mailto:kristian.bjorkdahl@sum.uio.no) by **February 1**, 2012. Notification of acceptance will be given by **February 15**, 2012. Deadline for submission of a full paper (10-15 pages) is **May 15**. Papers will be pre-circulated among the participants. There is an intention to publish papers from the workshop. Please direct any questions to [kristian.bjorkdahl@sum.uio.no](mailto:kristian.bjorkdahl@sum.uio.no).*

*Confirmed keynote speakers:*

Susan McHugh, University of New England

Mara Miele, Cardiff University