

HIS 340
Beastly Encounters:
Animal History Across Asia in the Long Nineteenth Century

Satisfies: GLO, SBS+

Thematic Categories: “Empires, Violence & Global Connections”;
“Health, Science & Environmental Change”

Tu/Th, 9:30 – 10:50 AM

Professor Tamara Fernando

Did you know that the most vital workers in British Burma’s lucrative teak industry were elephants? Or that the most populous colonizers of Australia were sheep, first introduced in 1797? Is history solely the purview of humans and human activity? Can we include animals in our historical narratives, and if so, how? We are still coming to terms with how the “Age of Empire” has dramatically changed our view of the nonhuman, especially animals. Ranging across time and space, we will meet animals, both real and imagined, including white ants in India, elephants in Myanmar and tigers in Malaya. We will ask how the burgeoning field of animal studies helps us to approach older concerns of power, race, capitalism, and environment in the context of empire. As debates about climate, race, species, and our place in an increasingly interconnected world grow more urgent, this course invites you to leave behind the comfortable anthropocentric view of world history.