

Philosophy Department Faculty Panel: Narrative, Ethics, and *The Lives of Animals*



Roundtable discussion with Jonathan Neufeld (Philosophy), Simon Lewis (English), and Ornaith O'Dowd (Philosophy)

In 1997, J. M. Coetzee's delivered the Tanner Lectures on Human Values that would become his novella *The Lives of Animals*. Typically, the Tanner lectures are philosophical essays presenting arguments on specific ethical or political problems or concepts. Instead of presenting the usual set of arguments, Coetzee delivered two lectures that were two chapters from a novella. The novella's central character, Elizabeth Costello, herself delivers two lectures on humans' mistreatment animals (to put it mildly). While she presents arguments and counterarguments, as do other characters in the story, these arguments do not simply stand as arguments—they are also, of course, literary devices that constitute the book as the work of *art* that it is. Is Coetzee really just making an argument, and just adding color to it with the story? Or does the fact that it is a piece of *literature* change the status of the arguments in it? Why might we make certain kinds of ethical claims in artistic form rather than in some other form (the form of philosophical argument typically found in the Tanner Lectures, for example)? Is there something about talking about the lives of animals, in particular, that calls for a literary, rather than a philosophical response?

Thursday, February 14th, 2013
12:15 pm—1:30 pm
Alumni Center, School of EHHP