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# Animal Cognition, the Importance of Touch, and the CIT

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SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY  
PRESIDENTIAL SEMINAR ON THE CATHOLIC  
INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

# ANIMAL COGNITION, THE IMPORTANCE OF TOUCH, AND THE CIT

Deirdre Yeater



# Goals

- ❑ Originally planned to create a 2-3 day learning module of lesson plans & in-class discussions for PSCC103.
- ❑ Currently, have created 5 in class discussions comparing human and non-human species, particularly dolphins, with an emphasis on the CIT and the importance of touch.
- ❑ Plan to use part of the lesson plans in FY125 as well.
- ❑ Plan to expand this module in the future after attending the Animal Ethics Seminar hosted by Fordham University in November.



# Class 1

## ▣ Film:

- “Charles Darwin and the Tree of Life”

## ▣ Readings:

- Pope John Paul II's Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (October, 22, 1996) *Truth Cannot Contradict Truth*
- *Adam, Eve, and Evolution* from Catholic Answers
- Richard Hughes *how Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind*
- Discussion



# Class 2

- ▣ In class debate on human nature.
- ▣ Readings:
  - Chapter 2, *Human Evolution* from the Nanda and Warms *Cultural Anthropology*
  - Donald Griffin's *Animal Minds*, In *Human Nature* by Barash
  - Discussion



# Class 3

## ▣ Film:

- “Clever Monkeys”

## ▣ Readings:

- New York Times article *Scientist Finds the Beginnings of Morality in Primate Behavior*
- New Scientist article *Death in dolphins: do they understand they are mortal?*
- Discussion



# Class 4

- ▣ Lecture:

- Summary of *"The Marvelous Connection of Things": Tomas Aquinas and Nonhuman Animals*

- ▣ Readings:

- Chapter 10 *Cooperation* and Chapter 11 *Kindness* in *The Moral Lives of Animals* by Dale Peterson
- Discussion



# Class 5

## ▣ Lecture:

- Touch: Communication and Reconciliation related to the CIT
  - ▣ A. Catholic sacraments
  - ▣ B. Touch as a form of greeting
  - ▣ C. Functions of touch in animals
  - ▣ D. Touch as a mode of dolphin emotional expression
  - ▣ E. Reconciliation in dolphins
  - ▣ F. Healing power of touch from the Bible
  - ▣ G. Touch as therapy/alternative medication
  - ▣ H. Summary of Thomas White's *In Defense of Dolphins: The New Moral Frontier*



# Learning Module Assignment

- ▣ Watch the online documentary “Ape Genius” online by NOVA/PBS
- ▣ Students will write a 2-3 page reaction paper to the video
  - Must also relate the paper to the CIT, the class material from the module, and at least one of the common core questions