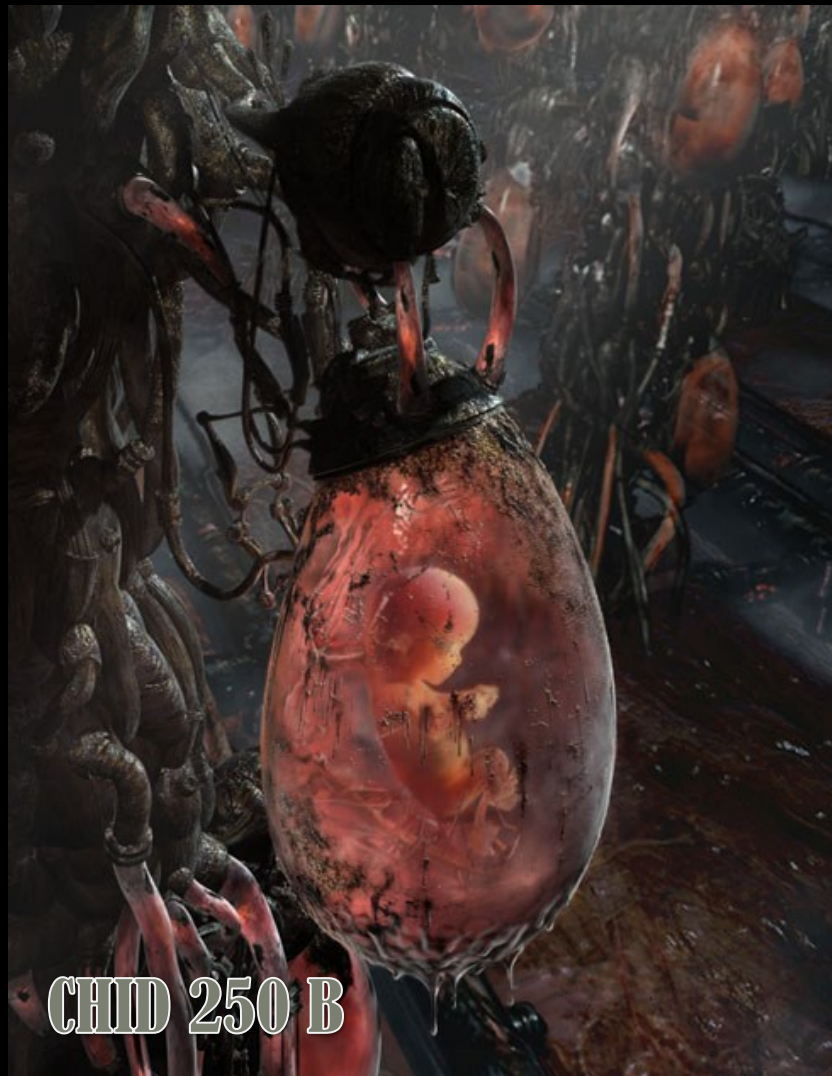


Manufacturing the Human: Borders, Becomings, and Interspecies Politics



This course examines historical productions of the human and human sovereignty through engagements with and appropriations of other-than-human (e.g. animal) life and its representations. We will use recent theoretical frames (affect theory, posthumanism, new materialisms, biopolitics) to wrestle with thorny, fully present debates that circulate around human-animal (and constantly redefined human-human) relations: regulation of identity, human exceptionalism, animal consciousness, anthropomorphism, food politics, animals as technology, pet-keeping, conflicts over land and ecology (to name a few). In these debates we unpack the categories of human and animal and chart their alterations across time, place, and technologies. This entails cutting into the tense knots between mediation (textual, pictorial, filmic, museal, virtual) and other forms of lived experience localizable in specific and varied historical case studies. Some of the sites and cases we will visit include persistent conceptions of the medieval wild-man; Nazi eugenics and its relation to contemporary gene therapy/notions of human capital; nineteenth-century taxidermy and imperialist expansion; royal menageries and the transition to the bourgeois zoo; utopian and dystopian imaginaries entwined with actualized species genocide; and changes in the performance and gendered practices of animal rights. Finally, we will theorize through embodied encounters with living animals and explore methods of artistic, creative, and political co-production – to experience the ways in which a more-than-human assemblage can expand, challenge, and alter notions of the self. By looking across history, categories, and geography, it is my hope that we can open up a space for imagining a better, more considerate interspecies politics.

Instructor: Scott Venters | AUT16 | I&S | VLPA