

Dinosaurs, Sea Serpents, and Abominable Snowmen: Unknown Animals in Modern History

HIST 40S

Instructor: Peder Roberts

Course Description

Why does the Loch Ness Monster have a scientific name despite being generally being considered not to exist? How did Native Americans think about fossils, and how did this knowledge relate to European paleontology? Why do ‘living fossils’ attract so much attention? Who exactly determines the ‘right’ way to study – or even just represent – the sasquatch or the yeti?

The central goal of this course is to examine how the way people think about these and other animals is related to their historical context. Our case studies include dinosaurs, mastodons, the Gloucester Sea Serpent, the yeti, the mountain gorilla, lake monsters, and the Flores ‘hobbit people’. We will use a variety of sources including media reports, photographs, movies, personal recollections, historical analyses, scientific papers and documents, novels, and comic books.

Course Aims

Students will:

- Consider how scientific evidence can inform historical research, and *vice versa*.
- Learn to work with a range of primary sources, not limited to written texts.
- Explore the relationship between popular culture and scientific knowledge.
- Analyze how and why individuals claim expertise or privileged knowledge.
- Examine the relationship between knowledge claims and the intellectual and cultural context within which they are made.

Assessment

There will be four forms of assessment:

1. **Class Participation and Leadership (25%)**. Each student will be responsible for leading the class discussions for one discussion section. This will entail preparing a set of three to five questions that will help facilitate discussion, and should be circulated to the class by email no later than 6pm the night before each meeting. Students are expected to attend all classes and come prepared to actively discuss the material. If you are unavoidably absent, you must contact the instructor *before* the class and arrange a make-up assignment.
2. **Critical Review (25%)**. Each student will write a four-page critical review of two primary sources from Weeks Two, Three, or Four. These will receive a letter grade and detailed feedback, and are due at the beginning of the first class of Week Five (Monday)
3. **Science and Popular Culture Paper (20%)**. Each student will write a three-page paper explaining how the novel and film versions of *The Lost World* function as

resources for historians. This assignment is due at the beginning of the second class of Week Seven.

4. **Final Paper (30%).** Each student will write a five-page paper that examines the role of different types of evidence in evaluating the existence of either the Loch Ness Monster or the yeti/sasquatch. Students should use at least two sources from outside the course material, and may consult the instructor for advice on locating material. All students must electronically submit a draft by the final class of Week 10, which the instructor will comment upon and return by Saturday, December 9. The final copy of the paper is due by 5pm on Thursday, December 14 and should be submitted electronically to peder.roberts@stanford.edu.

Barring truly exceptional circumstances (such as a medical emergency), extensions will only be granted if the instructor is informed *before* the due date. Late submissions will be penalized at the rate of one half-grade per day, and will not be graded *at all* if they are submitted more than four days after the due date.

Course Schedule

* Note: Primary sources are underlined.

Week One: Introduction; Source Analysis

1. Introduction (September 25)
2. Thinking About Source Analysis (September 27)

Week Two: American Monsters

1. Making Sense of Strange Bones (October 2)
 - Filson, J., *The Discovery and Settlement of Kentucke*, pp. 33-36.
 - Jefferson, T., *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 43-55. Available online through SUL.
 - Jefferson *et al.*, 'Circular Letter', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, pp. xxxvii-xxxix, Available through JSTOR.
 - Jefferson, letter to Bernard Lacépède, 24 February 1803.
2. The Meaning of Mastodons (October 4)
 - Semonin, P., *American Monster: How the Nation's First Prehistoric Creature Became a Symbol of National Identity* (2000), pp. 162-213.

Week Three: Different Images of Extinct Animals

1. Native Americans and Knowledge of Mammoths (October 9)
 - Adams, R.C., 'The Legend of the Great Bear' and 'The Legend of the Ya Qua Whee or Mastodon', in *Legends of the Delaware Indians and Picture Writing*, 1997, pp. 26 and 57-58.
 - Deatrack, T., and Babbitt, J., 'The Last Mammoth: Lewis and Clark's Secret Expedition' (2005), http://www.nathpo.org/Many_Nations/mn_news17.html
 - Mayor, A., *Fossil Legends of the Native Americans* (2005), pp. 53-72.

- Simpson, G.G., 'The Beginnings of Vertebrate Paleontology in North America', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 86, 1942, pp. 130-132. Available through JSTOR.

2. Does a Picture Tell A Thousand Words? (October 11)

- Peale, C.W., 'Exhumation of the Mastodon', 1806 painting.
- Miller, L.B., 'Charles Willson Peale as History Painter: "The Exhumation of the Mastodon"', *American Journal of Art* 13 (1), 1981, pp. 47-68.

Week Four: Sea Serpents

* *Critical Review Due*

1. The Gloucester Sea Serpent (October 16)

- Collection of first-hand accounts of the Gloucester Sea Serpent, from Gordon, J. (ed.), *A Collection of Scientific Articles and Newspaper Reports from 1816 to 1905, Relating to That Gigantic Aquatic Monster Known as the Sea Serpent, including Reports from Boston, Portland, Gloucester, Salem, Hallowell, Nahant, California, also Snake Stories and Stray Gems of Marine Poetry.*
- O'Neill, J.P., *The Great New England Sea Serpent: An Account of Unknown Animals Sighted By Many Respectable Persons Between 1638 and the Present Day*, pp. 8-13.

2. 'Science Accepts but Ignorance Rejects'? (October 18)

- Heuvelmans, *In the Wake of the Sea-Serpents* (1968), Chapter 6 ('Science Accepts but Ignorance Rejects: American Period 1817-1847'), pp. 143-197.

Week Five: New Frontiers in Theory and Exploration

1. The Discovery of Dinosaurs (October 23)

- Rudwick, M.J.S., *Scenes from Deep Time* (1992), pp. 42-96.

2. Darwin and Evolution (October 25)

- Darwin, C., *On the Origin of Species* (1859), pp. 5-15, 263-289.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/stanford/Doc?id=2001769>

Week Six: The Lost World

1. The Novel... (October 30)

- Conan Doyle, A., *The Lost World* (1912).
- Murray, R.S., 'The British Guiana Expedition', *Science* 82 (2115), 1935, pp. 38-39.

2. ... And the Film (date to be determined by class)

- The classic 1925 film version of *The Lost World* (dinner will be provided!)

Week Seven: The (Re)Discovery of the Coelacanth

* *Science and Popular Culture Paper Due*

1. Finding a Living Fossil (November 6)

- Smith, J.L.B., 'A Living Fish of Mesozoic Type', *Nature* 18 March 1939, pp. 455-56, 464.

- Smith, J.L.B., *Old Fourlegs: The Story of the Coelacanth* (1956), pp. 27-56.
- Weinberg, S., *A Fish Caught in Time: The Search for the Coelacanth*, pp. 63-102.

2. Can it be Discovered Twice? (November 8)

- Erdmann, M.V., Caldwell, R.L., and Kasim Moosa, M., 'Indonesian "King of the Sea" Discovered', *Nature* 395, 24 September 1998, p. 335.
http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v395/n6700/full/395335a0_fs.html
- Weinberg, *A Fish Caught in Time*, pp. 200-227.
- <http://www.cryptomundo.com/cryptozoo-news/indocoelfilm/>

Week Eight: The Loch Ness Monster

1. 'What Was It?' (November 13)

- News reports from the London Times (1933-34).
- Binns, R., *The Loch Ness Mystery Solved* (1983), pp. 48-106.
- Dinsdale, T., *Loch Ness Monster* (1960), Chapter 2 ('Fable and Fact'), pp. 27-41.
- Manning-Sanders, R., *Scottish Folk Tales* (1976), Chapter 13 ('The Loch Ness Kelpie'), pp. 88-92.

2. Does Science Accept? (November 15)

- Scott, Sir P.S., and Rines, R., 'Naming the Loch Ness Monster', *Nature* 258, 11 December 1975, pp. 466-469.
<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v258/n5535/pdf/258466a0.pdf>
- Various, correspondence regarding the Loch Ness Monster, *Nature* 259, 15 January 1976, pp. 75-76.
<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v259/n5539/pdf/259075c0.pdf>
- Binns, *Loch Ness Mystery Solved*, pp. 126-164.

Thanksgiving Break

Week Nine: Abominable Snowmen

1. The Yeti (November 27)

- Messner, R., *My Quest for the Yeti: Confronting the Himalayas' Deepest Mystery* (2000), pp. 123-134, 149-157.
- Shackley, M., *Wildmen* (1983), Chapter 3 ('The Original Yeti'), pp. 52-68.
- Hergé, *Tintin in Tibet* (1960).

2. Identifying the Sasquatch (November 29)

- Bindernagel, J.A., *North America's Great Ape: The Sasquatch* (1998), pp. 3-6, 135-154.
- Taft, M., 'Sasquatch-Like Creatures in Newfoundland: A Study in the Problems of Belief, Perception, and Reportage', in *Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence* (1980), pp. 83-96.
- Higgins, A., 'Evaluating Purported Sasquatch Photographic Evidence' (2004),
http://www.texasbigfoot.com/photo_eval.html

Week Ten: Cryptozoological Controversy Today

1. The Flores 'Hobbit Men' (December 4)

- Morwood, M. *et al.*, 'Archaeology and Age of a New Hominin from Flores in Eastern Indonesia', *Nature* 431, 28 October 2004, pp. 1087-1091.
<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v431/n7012/pdf/nature02956.pdf>
- Lahr, M.M. and Foley, R., 'Palaeoanthropology: Human Evolution Writ Small', *Nature* 431, 28 October 2004, pp. 1043-44.
<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v431/n7012/pdf/4311043a.pdf>
- Hawkes, N., 'Professor Fuels Row Over Hobbit Man Fossils', *London Times Online*, 3 December 2004. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-1386423,00.html>
- Wikipedia Discussion Page: *Homo floresiensis*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Homo_floresiensis

2. Concluding Discussion (December 6)

* *Draft of Final Paper Due*