

Animals and Human Hunting (Alfter, 19–21 Mar 26)

Alanus Hochschule, Alfter (near Bonn), Germany, Mar 19–21, 2026

Deadline: Aug 31, 2025

Maurice Saß

Animals and Human Hunting: Challenging the Lethal Difference.

Hunting can be understood as an activity performed by human subjects aiming for the death of animal subjects defined as 'prey', thereby creating a lethal hierarchy whose symbolic quality is transferable to a variety of social and symbolical spheres. This specific perspective on hunting has been prevalent in areas such as literary studies, cultural studies and historical disciplines for the last decade. Foregrounding the hierarchical implications of hunting has proven to be useful when it comes to the critical deconstruction of classist, sexist, racist and other forms of discrimination brought forth, upheld and legitimized by hunting and (scholarly, artistic, literary etc.) hunting discourses.

Despite the importance of this perspective, its implied universalism has a problematic quality as it masks a certain provinciality. Furthermore, its tendency to conceive of hunting as a primarily human affair and to describe animals merely as passive victims without any agency whatsoever is (involuntarily) steeped in speciesism and ignores the complicated and (in Hegelian terms) dialectical nature of hunting. The aim of the workshop is to focus hunting via the lens of animal agency, maybe even perspective, and to illustrate the diversity of constellations in which hunting is and has been described as an experience shared by humans and animals and based on mutual if not necessarily reciprocal dependencies. We therefore welcome papers that examine local artefacts, practices and narratives of hunting, that address the moments of dialogue, interaction, shared situationality between species, that understand humans as part of an animal community, and that conceive of hunting as a physical and cognitive immersion in the more-than-human interconnectedness of an ecosystem. At the same time, it is important to approach the plurality of animal perspectives in the sense of an animated history, and to differentiate both the hunted animals (e.g. according to their defensiveness, their 'charisma' or their privileged perception as individuals or collectives) and the hunting companion species (e.g. according to their function in tracking, chasing, killing, camouflaging, attracting or transporting) – and not to forget the 'third' animals that indirectly benefit from hunting, suffer or adapt in other ways. It should become clear which methodological approaches are suitable for opening up ways of understanding hunting that do more justice to the agency of animals who, even as lethal victims, are always also active subjects. We are also especially interested in exploring global as well as glocal, comparative, postcolonial and marginalized perspectives on hunting practices and are eager to discover variety as well as unexpected similarities.

For these and related questions, we especially ask for suggestions for topics in anthropology, art

and cultural studies, ethnology, environmental humanities, literature studies, history, regional studies and other fields. To submit send a 250 words abstract for a 20 or 30 minute paper (English or German) and a short bio to Dr. Laura Beck (laura.beck@germanistik.uni-hannover.de), Prof. Dr. Maurice Saß (Maurice.Sass@alanus.edu), and Prof. Dr. Thomas Widlok (thomas.widlok@uni-koeln.de) before August 31, 2025. Reimbursements of travel and/or stay may be offered at least partially. After the conference we would like to publish the results in an anthology as soon as possible.

Schedule:

Deadline for submissions: 31 August 2025

Applicants will be notified by 20 September 2025

Date of the conference (Alanus University, Alfter): 19.-21. March 2026

Keywords: Human Animal Studies, Anthropology, Ecocriticism, Environmental Humanities, Post-colonial Studies, Cultural Studies, History of Hunting etc.

Organizers:

Dr. Laura Beck (University of Bremen)

Prof. Dr. Maurice Saß (Alanus University)

Prof. Dr. Thomas Widlok (University of Cologne)

Reference:

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