

The College of Arts & Sciences
Center for the Humanities and the
Animal Studies Research Group present

***Night-Rule:
Empires of the Nonhuman in
Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Descartes***



Laurie Shannon

Associate Professor of English
Wender Lewis Teaching and Research Professor
Northwestern University

Thursday April 7, 2011 4:30 pm

3rd Floor Conference Room
Richter Library
1300 Memorial Dr.

Descartes's *Discourse on Method* celebrated human reason, while Montaigne in his essays questioned it, saying "When I play with my cat, who knows whether she is not amusing herself with me more than I am with her?" This lecture considers the debate between Montaigne and Descartes on the claims of animals in order to show how Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* questions, rather than celebrates, human authority over animals.

Laurie Shannon is Associate Professor of English and the Wender Lewis Teaching and Research Professor at Northwestern University. She was awarded the Robert B. Cox Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award and The Dean's Award for Graduate Mentoring (both at Duke University) and has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Guggenheim Foundation. She is author of *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago, 2002). *The Necessary Animal: Zootopian Politics in the Environs of Shakespeare* (forthcoming from Chicago) takes up the role of animal variation to investigate the species concept in an era so often credited -- and discredited -- with an invention of the human. Shannon is also at work on *Of English Dogges: Early Modern Canines in Print* (an edition of John Caius' 1576 text, which was the first comprehensive encyclopedia of dog breeds printed in English) as well as a manuscript on animal agency, entitled *What the Tiger Meant and Other Tales of Animal Intention*.

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