

The Department
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presents

**THE PAUL A & MARIE CASTLEFRANCO
LECTURE**

**Professor Naisargi Dave
University of Toronto**

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Love and Other Injustices: On Humans, Animals, and Indifference to Difference

Animal activists in India, as elsewhere, are often referred to as “animal lovers.” Many wear the moniker with pride, and others, with apathy—they just want to go about their work, whatever you call them. But the conflation of ethics with love has deep significance epistemologically and politically. One, what does it mean to “love” “animals?” Animal is a category, a vague and impermanent one like any, and so what is it to represent one of loving in generality? It is, I think, to suggest that one is in fact not capable of love at all, that one loves classes instead of the idiosyncratic specificity that is at the heart of intimacy, and thus of modern subjectivity. The assumed centrality of love to labor on behalf of animals also moves that labor out from the realm of reason and into that of sense (not as in common sense, which is just another term for reason, but as in the other to rationality) and in so doing vacates animal ethics of the normative *and* the immanent, leaving it as no ethics at all because it is only precisely idiosyncratic (“there can be no rules to blindly follow, nor any requirement to openness in how I treat an animal other, because I either love animals, or I don’t”). This paper is in part an analysis of what it means and what it does to conflate ethics with love and, therein, is a critique of the politics of care. But I am also interested in tracing the relationship in animal politics between love and ahimsa: the latter, a practice of indifference and the former, a politics of distinction. I argue in this paper for another kind of ethic—indifference to difference— drawing from my fieldwork with animal activists and their interlocutors in India.



Naisargi N. Dave is an associate professor in the Anthropology Department at the University of Toronto. She received her PhD from the University of Michigan in 2006. Dave’s book, *Queer Activism in India: A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics* (Duke University Press, 2012), won the Association for Queer Anthropology’s Ruth Benedict Prize for outstanding monograph in 2013. Her articles have appeared in journals such as *Cultural Anthropology*, *American Ethnologist*, *Signs*, *CSSAAME*, and *Feminist Studies*. Dave’s second book is tentatively titled *The Social Skin: Humans and Animals in India*.

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