How to start a conversation with your instructor about non-animal alternatives

If you want to opt out of using animals in your UBC education, the first thing to know is that you’re not alone: you are among the 30% of students who want to be offered a non-animal alternative. You should also be aware that it is your right to opt out if you choose to do so.

1) Get clarity - Before approaching your instructor, be sure to be clear on your own reasons for wanting to opt-out. If it helps, write them down! This will help you to more clearly articulate your stance when you speak to your instructor.

2) Do some research – Find out what animals you are likely to be expected to use as part of the course you are registered for, and what tasks you will be required to do (e.g. dissection). That will help target your research. You can use the alternatives table on this website, or if your course isn't listed search other various online resources (e.g. AnimalLearn, InterNiche, Norecopa). This is an important step! Please do not expect your instructor to do this research for you – they already have a intense work load and are less likely to take your concerns about using animals seriously if you present them with a problem and more work to do, rather than coming in with a solution for them. Empower yourself and take charge of your own learning!

3) Get allies - Chances are, there are other students who have similar concerns, so consider reaching out to other students who might want to join you in advocating for the use of non-animal alternatives.

4) Approach your instructor – First and foremost, be respectful. Your instructors work hard to create the best learning environment they can with the limited resources they have available. Clearly articulate your concerns and present them with your research and non-animal options. Remember to stand firm in your right to opt out, while maintaining respect for your instructor.

5) Teach others! – If other students see you doing something different from them, they will likely ask you about it. This is your chance to tell them about your choice to opt out, and show them how cool it is to learn with a non-animal alternative! Post about your decision on a relevant UBC Facebook group page, or Twitter account!

6) Tell us about your experience – If you use a non-animal alternative in your UBC class, feel free to write and tell us about it. We’d love to share your story on our website for future students to learn from!