



**LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND COUNSELING**  
**MCFT 563: The animal-human bond and counseling**  
**Spring 2015**

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When: 04/ 03/2015- 04/ 04/2015 Friday, Saturday 09:00AM - 05:30PM

Where: York 116

Instructor: Pilar Hernández-Wolfe, Ph.D , LMFT

Office Hours: By appointment

E-Mail: pilarhw@lclark.edu

### **CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

Contemporary scholarship provides evidence for the importance of the relationship between humans and animals, ranging from the significance of companion animals and the need for social support for the bereaved pet owners to the relationship between animal abuse and child abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse. Research has documented the therapeutic benefits of animals, and pet-facilitated therapy is highly consistent with systemic approaches fostering resilience and ecopsychology. This two day course addresses the counseling implications of the complex bond between humans and other animals. Topics covered include: 1) an overview of the relationship between humans and animals and why related knowledge, attitudes and skills are important for therapists; 2) animals as pets and their health and mental health benefits for over the life course; 3) pet-facilitated therapy and the use of service animals; 4) animal abuse and its relationship to domestic violence; 5) ethical issues and controversies, including animal rights, animals and research, vegetarianism and counseling.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The animal human bond is a well-documented phenomenon that has been around since humans began domesticating animals. Healing is complex and interfaces with numerous dimensions including diet, exercise, genetics and social and emotional processes. The literature suggests that caring relationships between humans and animals have a significant impact on our neuro-chemistry, enhancing our well-being. The following topics will be reviewed and discussed: a systemic perspective on our relationship with animals, family relationships and the role of pets in families, attachment and separation anxiety, vicarious and experiential learning and pet assisted therapies, domestic violence, and ethical issues relative to our relationships and use of animals. This course will combine experiential learning, lectures and seminar discussions.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

Students will be able to:

1. Understand the meaning of the human animal bond at the level of larger ecological and social systems, family dynamics and attachment.
2. Examine contemporary neurobiological research involving pets and humans
3. Examine the use of pet assisted therapies
4. Understand the relationship between violence towards animals and domestic violence
5. Understand ethical issues relative to the human-animal relationship

## **TEACHING METHODS**

A variety of teaching methods will be utilized during this course in order to achieve the above objectives. Among those methods will be assigned readings, class discussions, experiential activities, and lectures.

## **READINGS:**

Students are expected to be prepared to discuss the ideas and concepts discussed in the readings. The textbook should be read in its entirety by the end of the course.

## **CPSY Departmental Attendance Policy**

Class attendance is expected and required. Any missed class time will be made up by completing extra assignments designed by the instructor. Missing more than ten percent of class time may result in failure to complete the class. This would be 4.5 hours of a 45 hour class (3 credits), 3.0 hours for a 30 hour class (2 credits) or 1.5 hours for a 15 hour class (1 credit.) In case of extreme hardship and also at the discretion of the instructor, a grade of incomplete may be given for an assignment or the entire course. In such cases, the work to be submitted in order to remove the incomplete must be documented appropriately and stated deadlines met. Students are expected to be on time to class and tardiness may be seen as an absence that requires make-up work.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. Participation (30 pts)**

- Full attendance to both days of class is required for a passing grade
- Giving attention to the instructor and/or other students when they are making a presentation.
- Demonstrating ability to recognize and use subtle non-verbal communication cues to assess your impact on your peers and participate in class.
- Demonstrating ability to be open about discussing the impact of your comments on your peers.
- Coming to class prepared (having read the assignment for the day)

- Contributing to in-class discussion based on the topics of discusses and the readings assigned. Contributions may include how you feel about the material but merely articulating your feelings is not sufficient. You are expected to put those feelings in context of your thoughts and analysis of the material.
  - Engaging in group discussions with attention and energy.
  - Asking questions of the instructor and/or other students regarding the material examined in that class.
  - Providing examples to support or challenge the issues talked about in class.
  - Making comments or giving observations about topics in the course, especially those that tie in the classroom material to "real world" problems, or try to integrate the content of the course.
  - Dealing with other students and/or the instructor in a respectful fashion.
  - Active listening. Students will be asked questions related to the course's readings randomly in class by other students and by the instructor. Your participation in small group discussions is also required.
2. **Experiential paper** – 30 pts – due on 4/3
- a) Describe your relationship with animals (past, present or both)
  - b) What specific impact have animals had on your life or the lives of others close to you?
  - c) What have you learned from your relationship with animals or from witnessing someone else relationship with animals? Be specific.
3. **Final paper** – 40 pts – (3 to 5 pages, double space, due on 4/17/15)

Based on your readings from the “Psychology of the human-animal bond,”

- a) select the topic that impacted you most
  - b) Discuss why this particular topic generated such resonance**
  - c) Describe how you would explain to a family the meaning and role of the pet in the family.
  - d) Describe how you understand attachment issues in the relationship between family members and their pet/s
  - e) Describe how you would address the human animal bond in family therapy with a family in which some members relate well to pets and others do not (how would you explain the nature of the connection, its importance, its role in the family).
  - f) Discuss how you would address the loss or anticipated loss of a pet with a family seeking help to go through the bereavement process.
4. **APA format.**

All papers should be typed APA style with all references appropriately cited, must be edited and checked for correct grammar. See <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>

## **TEXTBOOKS:**

Required:

Blazina, C., Boyra, G. & Shen-Miller, D. (2011). *The psychology of the human-animal bond*. NY, NY: Springer.

Recommended:

Fine, A. (2010). *Animal-assisted therapy*. Boston, MA: Elsevier.

## **FINAL GRADING**

A = 93-100

B = 83-87

C = 73-77

A- = 90-92

B- = 80-82

C- = 70-72

B+ = 88-89

C+ = 78-79

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY/SPECIAL ASSISTANCE**

Lewis & Clark College adheres to a nondiscriminatory policy with respect to employment, enrollment, and program. The College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or disability, sexual orientation, or marital status and has a firm commitment to promote the letter and spirit of all equal opportunity and civil rights laws.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS/ ACCOMMODATIONS**

Please see me individually at the beginning of the semester if you require any special accommodations as a result of a documented disability.

## **DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

The Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) requires the program to have “established policies for informing applicants and students regarding disclosure of their personal information” (COAMFTE Standard 140.02, 2003). Each student should decide for him/herself what information to disclose. Students are advised to be prudent when making self-disclosures. The program cannot guarantee confidentiality of student disclosures given the group environment, although personal comments should be considered private and confidential – and remain only in the classroom – unless an exception to confidentiality applies.

## **CELL PHONES**

Cell phones must be silenced and text messaging is not allowed during class time. If there is an emergency you may exit the class to use your cell.