



**LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND
COUNSELING**

**CPSY 590/MCFT 563: The animal-human bond and counseling
Fall 2023**

When: Friday/Saturday 10/6 and 10/7 from 9 am-5:30 pm
Where: York 107
Instructor: Sharon Cabana, MA, LMFT
Office Hours: By appointment or available before start of class
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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 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; 6) issues pertaining to the animal-human bond and specific populations (neurodiversity, race, age, etc).

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.

Program Objectives:

SLO 1.2: Students recognize the interconnections among biological, psychological, social systems in people’s lived experience.

SLO 1.3: Students apply systems/relational theories to clinical case conceptualization

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 maybe 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. **Reflection paper – 30 pts – (4/6 pages due on December 1, 2023 send to smcabana@lclark.edu**

Identify an experience of connection with an animal in your life. Explain the connection you had and the history of the relationship and reflect on the following questions: If you have been in relationship with a traumatized animal, what challenges have you witnessed traumatized animals overcome during the rehabilitation process? (if you have not had the experience of rehabilitating an animal, describe a significant relationship with an animal; if you have no relationship with animals, interview someone who does)

Do you have any thoughts about how you may have been positively impacted by the animals that you have been in relationship with and/or that you may have saved and rehabilitated?

Looking back, did your relationship with the animals you've been in relationship with (and you may have rehabilitated) transform you?

- Did it influence how you work with other animals?
- Did it transform your personal life?

- Has it influenced how you interact with people?
- Has it transformed your values?
- Has it influenced how you make meaning of life/ the world around you?
- Has it influenced you in the ways of making meaning of tragedy?
- Has it influenced you when dealing with adversity in your own life?

What aspects of the Animal Human Bond can you better understand now as a result of this relationship?

3. Final paper – 40 pts – (8-10 page, double space, due no later than December 12, 2023 – send to smcabana@clark.edu)

Choose One:

Option A)

Based on your reading of the Handbook on Animal Assisted Therapy, the material presented in class and discussions with your peers,

- a) Create (2 page) vignette illustrating the animal human bond and its relevance in clinical practice. You may choose any topic highlighting the central role of this bond in a family, couple, an individual's life or an organization. You may also choose to identify the development of the relationship between animal and humans before, during or after an issue deemed suitable for counseling is described in the vignette (e.g. if you focus on loss as a theme, you can focus on - the loss of a pet; - the loss of another important relationship and how a pet became central to healing and how the evolution of the relationship).
- b) Describe how you would explain to a family, couple or individual the meaning and role of the pet in the family using your vignette
- c) Describe how you understand attachment issues in the relationship between humans and pet/s using your vignette
- d) Describe how you would address the human animal bond in counseling to address the clinical issue identified in your vignette.

Option B) Practical Exercise and Report

- a) Interview (in-person, zoom, facetime, etc.) a provider in the community currently conducting animal-assisted therapy. Interviews can be structured/unstructured and should last approximately 1 hr.
- b) Discuss the interview and incorporate material from the class and your readings to discuss elements you would include or not include in your practice and any ethical/legal considerations you learn about from the interview should you decide to pursue animal-assisted therapy.
- c) Describe how your interviewees' model relates to the practice of ecopsychology and issues such as attachment, trauma, or other areas of particular interest for your future practice

- d) Identify at least one additional source related to the interviewee's model and compare/contrast information between the resources. Compare and contrast theory and praxis regarding animal-assisted therapies.

Option C) "The Book Report"

- a) Choose **2** books/resources specifically about the human-animal bond. Books should be geared towards adult audiences and address themes discussed in class. For experience, I recommend different genres (e.g. historical, memoir, fiction, etc.).
- b) Compare and contrast how these books address the animal-human bond and/or animal-assisted therapy.
- c) Incorporating material in class, discuss the ways in which these books speak to issues regarding the human-animal bond and animal-assisted therapies as a whole.
- d) Discuss how you would treat the author or subjects of the book in a therapy setting.
- e) It is acceptable to substitute **1** of the books with a multimedia option including a movie, documentary, docuseries, or podcast. In cases where students have different learning styles, two multimedia options are possible with instructor approval.

Ideas for Resources:

Book Lists:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2017/oct/04/top-10-human-animal-relationships-in-literature-world-animal-day>

<https://www.bustle.com/articles/2278-9-human-animal-friendship-books>

<https://bookriot.com/best-animal-fiction-for-adults/>

Good Reads also has a very large list of options out there.

Here are some other ideas for you:

Chosen by a Horse Susan Richards
She Flies Without Wings Mary D Midkiff
The Perfect Horse Elizabeth Letts
The Eighty Dollar Champion Elizabeth Letts
Life of Pi Yann Martel
H is for Hawk Helen Macdonald
Marley and Me John Grogan
Seabiscuit Laura Hillenbrand
All Creatures Great and Small James Herriot
The Fox and I Catherine Raven
The Inner Life of Animals Peter Wohlleben
Whole Heart, Whole Horse Mark Rashid
Animals in Translation Temple Grandin

4. APA format.

All papers should be typed APA style with all references appropriately cited, must be edited and checked for correct grammar.

TEXTBOOKS:

Fine, A. (2019). *Handbook on animal assisted therapy*. U.K: Elsevier

Recommended articles:

Walsh, F. (2009). Human-animal bonds I: The relational significance of companion animals. *Family Process*, [48\(4\)](#), 462–480.

Walsh, F. (2009). Human-animal bonds II: The role of pets in family systems and family therapy. *Family Process*, *48(4)*, 481–499.

Hernandez-Wolfe, P. (2018). Ecoinformed Couple and Family Therapy, Systems Thinking, and Social Justice, *Ecopsychology*. 10(3) 151-157

FINAL GRADING

A = 93-100

A- = 90-92

B+ = 88-89

B = 83-87

B- = 80-82

C+ = 78-79

C = 73-77

C- = 70-72

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.