



## **The Thinking Animal: Cognition and Behavior**

**Fall 2021**

Thursdays at 6 pm EST – 4 weeks – September 23<sup>rd</sup> – October 14<sup>th</sup>

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### **Course materials**

Required: Computer, high speed internet access, microphone and speakers

### **Prerequisites**

None. Introduction to Ethology would be helpful, but is not required.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Distinguish between cognition and associative processes
- Detail the cognitive capabilities of non-human animals including concept formation, understanding of time and numbers, memory, and language.
- Define anthropomorphism and explain how it relates to working with animals
- Define consciousness and discuss how it is assessed in non-human animals
- Describe what we know so far about consciousness in non-human animals
- Explain what we know about self-awareness in non-human animals (with a focus on dogs)
- Explain why understanding cognition is relevant to living and working with animals
- Apply knowledge of cognition to working with animals (with a focus on dogs)
- Come away with a new set of concrete tools that are directly applicable to working with dogs
- Be able to analyze, integrate and apply new information to fit into current framework of knowledge. If it doesn't fit into current framework, be able to pursue novel paths of thinking.

### **Course Description and Organization**

#### *Content*

Have you ever wondered what's going on in your dog's head? Cognition refers to those intangible, invisible mental processes that influence behavior. It includes fascinating capabilities such as understanding time, concept formation, reasoning, self-awareness and communication. All of these abilities combine to form the mental experience of an animal. And understanding that experience is critical to understanding behavior! This is truly fascinating stuff—and it will give you a new perspective on how to change behavior and promote wellbeing.



This course covers several different areas of cognition as well as the application and integration of these topics. The course covers cognition in general and many of the concepts will apply to any species, but we do focus on dogs. Throughout the course, students will have multiple opportunities to use in class activities to further their understanding of the material and to receive feedback regarding their progress in the course.

#### *Format*

I believe that the most effective learning occurs when students are not only provided with the facts, but also have ample opportunity to use that information in concrete ways, engage in challenging activities, interact with others and receive frequent feedback on their progress.

Therefore, this course will be taught using an approach that encourages collaboration and active learning. The course is divided into lecture and discussion sessions. All students have access to the lectures. Full students have access to lectures and discussions.

Lectures cover the course material and allow for student questions as well as some brief interactive activities. This will give you a solid foundation in the course material. Discussions are where the magic really happens! Discussions take a deep dive into the week's content, giving students plenty of opportunity to master, analyze, interpret, and apply the material from the lecture, all under my guidance.

#### *Approach*

First of all, I'll just own it. I really am a geek. As in, I get super excited about science stuff and dog behavior and new ideas. And I love sharing it all. Really love it. So you should probably expect a bit of enthusiasm.

Secondly, I have high standards. I think our industry could use a much deeper dive into the knowledge behind our craft. So you should expect to encounter much deeper material with me, and to study it at a higher level. Essentially I take a college approach rather than a conference one.

Thirdly, though, my standards for myself are just as high. If I'm going to ask you to do the work, you should know I'll be working my tail off to make sure you're successful. You'll find me prepared, full of creative ideas to help you really "get it" and be able to use it, and always ready to offer extra help or support. Because I'm also really friendly and always happy to chat science and dogs.

#### **CEUs**

##### Auditors:

- IAABC - 4 CEUs
- CCPDT – 4 CEUs
- CEUs will require watching the lectures and submitting the secret words.

##### Full students:

- IAABC – 10 CEUs
- CCPDT—8 CEUs



- CEUs will require completion of work in class as well as the completion of two quizzes. Quizzes must be passed with an 80% or higher and 80% or more of all in-class work must be submitted in order to earn CEUs. If you receive less than 80% on the quiz you may retake the quiz once, after contacting the instructor for clarification on the missed questions.

## Schedule

The course will start on Thursday, September 23rd. It runs for four weeks: 9/23, 9/30, 10/7, and 10/14.

- For all students: There will be a lecture at 6 pm Eastern time each Thursday. Class runs for about an hour. Each lecture will be conducted live and will include some interactive discussion. Lectures will also be recorded for students that are not able to attend live.
- For full students:
  - *Discussion sessions:* There will be a discussion section at about 7 pm Eastern time each week (immediately following lecture). This session will run about an hour and we will use the time to further explore the concepts in a variety of ways. For particularly tricky content, students will participate in exercises to solidify and practice the information presented during lecture. In addition, students will have practice at applying course material directly to working with dogs. Discussions use a team-based learning format where students will be presented with a challenge then given an opportunity to discuss the challenge with their team and agree on an answer. We will then discuss the answer as a group and I will provide additional information on applications and connections to other concepts. The discussion sections are designed to create deep, transformative, and lasting learning related to course material.
  - *Course assessments:* Full students will also receive quizzes and in-class assignments to assess their understanding of course material.

## Course Policies

Refunds, minus a \$10 processing fee, will be granted if requested up to 2 days before the start of class. After that, 50% refunds will be granted up until the start date of the course. Refunds are not available after the start of class.

Refunds will not be granted if you are unable to attend class and therefore unable to complete the required work. Excused absences will be granted in case of emergencies and illness (with proper documentation).