COUN 5530: Animal-Assisted Therapy
Course Syllabus

**Catalog Description**

Animal assisted therapy is the incorporation of qualified animals as therapeutic change agents into a therapeutic environment. The course explores techniques to facilitate animal-assisted therapeutic interventions in a variety of settings, including schools, counseling agencies, hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, prisons, and facilities for the developmentally disabled. A variety of animals can be suitable for therapy programs. You need not have an animal or pet to take the course.

Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.

**Goals of the Course**

The acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate animal-assisted therapy in a variety of professional settings in a fashion that is safe and humane to both animals and people.

**Learning Objectives**

This course is designed to help students:

- Understand the benefits of animal-assisted interventions applied in counseling.
- Gain knowledge on the selection, training, and evaluation of an animal for therapy work.
- Gain knowledge on theories and interventions for animal-assisted counseling.
- Understand how to apply animal-assisted interventions in a variety of settings with diverse populations.
- Understand ethical, legal, and professional issues related to practice of animal-assisted therapy.

**Core Curricular Experiences Covered**

There are no CACREP core curricular experiences covered in this course. This course is an elective.

**Course content:**

A. Definition and description of animal-assisted therapy & its role and function in counseling.
   Benefits of animal-assisted therapy.
   Neuroscience of the human-animal social connection and social interaction.
History and evolution of animal-assisted therapy.

B. Research in positive treatment effects of animal-assisted counseling.
   Enhancing psychophysiological health.
   Reducing anxiety and distress.
   Enhancing social interactions and reducing behavioral problems with patients with dementia.
   Reducing depression.
   Increasing motivation to participate in therapy.
   Self-esteem enhancement.
   Psychosocial benefits for children in pediatric hospitals.
   Psychosocial benefits for children with developmental disorders.
   Psychosocial benefits for children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral problems.
   Enhancing mood, life satisfaction, and social interaction with elderly and nursing home residents.
   Enhancing self-efficacy in physically disabled persons.
   Increasing motivation to participate in therapy, social interactions and reducing behavioral problems with patients in a psychiatric facility.

C. Selecting an animal for therapy work: Advantages and disadvantages of working with various species.
   Therapy dogs.
   Therapy cats.
   Therapy horses.
   Small therapy animals.
   Therapy farm animals.
   Therapy aquarium animals.

D. Positive training approaches to prepare an animal for therapy work.
   Socialization of the animal.
   Touch Desensitization.
   Obedience training (for dogs).
   Teaching special skills and trick training of the animal.

E. Evaluation of an animal for therapy work: Assessing temperament and aptitude.
   American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen Test.
   Therapy Dogs International testing requirements.
   Pet Partners Team Evaluation.

F. Risk Management along with ethical, legal and professional issues in animal assisted therapy.
   Professional disclosure and informed consent to participate.
   Human Client screening for animal-assisted therapy.
   Understanding your pet’s communication.
   Recognizing and responding to stress in therapy animals.
   Preventing injury and infection of humans and animals during therapy.
   Preparing the therapy animal for a therapy session.
   Being an advocate for the safety and welfare of the therapy animal.
   Work as a team with a therapy animal in a counseling facility, practice or program.
   Evaluating a site or facility for appropriateness of animal assisted therapy.
   Networking with all relevant staff when establishing an animal-assisted therapy practice or program.
   Establishing policies and procedures for the practice of animal assisted therapy at a program or facility.
   Professional liability insurance for animal-assisted therapy practice.

G. Understanding the human-animal connection from psychosocial and psychophysiological perspectives: Psychodynamics of animal-assisted therapy.
   Human-animal relational theory.
Animal assisted counseling intervention. Matching animal-assisted therapy techniques and intentions with counseling guiding theories.

H. Practices of animal-assisted therapy.
   Introducing the animal practitioner to the client.
   Rapport building.
   Animal assisted psychosocial goals and techniques.
   Basic relational techniques.
   Accessing client feelings.
   Family history gathering.
   Animal-assisted therapy and diagnoses.
   Animal-facilitated life stage development.
   Animal-assisted metaphor.

I. Equine-assisted counseling.
J. A variety of animal-assisted therapy applications.
   Small zoo as therapy.
   Therapy farm.
   Working with dolphins.
   College and university applications.
   Animal-assisted play therapy.

K. Cultural differences and populations with special needs.
   Being sensitive to diversity of individual and cultural views regarding animals and animal assisted therapy.
   Counseling with the physically challenged.
   Counseling children and adolescents.
   Counseling elderly clients.
   Counseling clients in hospitals and hospice settings.
   Counseling clients in prisons and detention centers.

L. Animal-assisted disaster/crisis response counseling.
   The nature of disaster/crisis and disaster/crisis response safety.
   Getting started as a disaster/crisis response counselor.
   Disaster/crisis response counseling interventions.

M. School applications of animal-assisted therapy.
N. International considerations.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Instructional methods might include lecture, discussion, demonstration and direct observation, readings, films, and student written examination to reach learning objectives. The instructor only assumes responsibility for providing some of the conditions that allow or encourage involvement. The degree to which you, the student, become involved will be a function of your own goals for this experience and the responsibility and initiative you assume for implementing your choice of goals.

REQUIRED TEXTS, READINGS, AND MATERIALS

STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

Class attendance and participation in discussions and activities 15%
Completion of a final take-home examination 85%
(You must do your own work, no sharing of ideas or answers allowed.)

Tentative Course Schedule

Due By Date
Materials and Required Tasks (Folders of class material located on website for CANVAS)

Week 1 Review contents of folder 1. Read text 1 chapter 1; read text 2 unit 1.
Topics: Define AAT, Neuroscience of Social Interaction, AAT History & Competencies.
Week 2 Review contents of folder 2. Read text 1 chapter 2.
Topics: Research of AAT and Related Areas.
Week 3 Review contents of folder 3. Read text 1 chapter 3.
Topic: Selecting a Therapy Animal.
Week 4 Review contents of folder 4. Read text 1 chapter 4; read text 2 units 2 & 3.
Topic: Training a Therapy Animal.
Week 5 Review contents of folder 5. Read text 1 chapter 5; read text 2 unit 4.
Topic: Evaluating a Therapy Animal.
Week 6 Review contents of folder 6. Read text 1 chapter 6; read text 2 unit 5.
Topics: Ethics, Risk Management, Animal Communication.
Week 7 Review contents of folder 7. Read text 1 chapter 7.
Topics: Psychodynamics of AAT and Human Animal Relational Theory.
Week 8 Review contents of folder 8. Read text 1 chapter 8; read text 2 units 6 & 7.
Topics: AAT Practice.
Topic: Equine-assisted counseling.
Week 10 Review contents of folder 10. Read text 1 chapter 10.
Topic: Other Applications of AAT.
Topic: Culture and Diversity Issues, and Special Needs Populations.
Week 12 Review contents of folder 12. Read text 1 chapter 12.
Topic: AAT for Crisis and Disaster Counseling.
Topic: AAT in the Schools.
Week 14 Continue with AAT topics.
Week 15 Turn in final exam answer sheet for grading. You may turn it in early.
Activity: Team Evaluations. If you are not being evaluated come to assist and observe.

SYLLABUS ADDENDUM

Succeed at UNT:

- Show Up
- Find Support
Take Control
· Be Prepared
· Get Involved
· Be Persistent

Academic Integrity and Academic Dishonesty

Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Academic Dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and sabotage. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with University policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of “F” in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. The policy and procedures are available at: http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.deanofstudents.unt.edu.

Disability Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at http://www.unt.edu/oda. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

EagleConnect

All UNT students should activate and regularly check their EagleConnect (e-mail) account. EagleConnect is used for official communication from the University to students. Many important announcements for the University and College are sent to students via EagleConnect. For information about EagleConnect, including how to activate an account and how to have EagleConnect forwarded to another e-mail address, visit https://eagleconnect.unt.edu. This is the main electronic contact for all course-related information and/or material.

Emergency Notifications and Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.
Observation of Religious Holy Days

If you plan to observe a religious holy day that coincides with a class day, please notify your instructor as soon as possible.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about students’ records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University’s policy.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT’s Dean of Students’ website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0. Esther Oppong is UNT’s Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students’ office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13 and 14 of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the spot website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

Campus Carry Notification [if applicable]

The class meets in a UNT facility in which the legal carrying of a concealed firearm by an LTC permit holder is prohibited. Please refer to campuscarry.unt.edu for more information.