There has been a flurry of work on dogs in the last several years that suggest dogs make seemingly impressive use of human social cues. In fact, Paul Bloom comments, "this may signal the emergence of a vibrant area of comparative cognition. For psychologists, dogs may be the next chimpanzees."

Leaving aside the question of whom is happier about this: the dogs or the chimps, the fact remains that dogs have been the focus of a great deal of work recently. Good news for those of us who spend our days thinking about what goes on in between those little ears. Perhaps though, the work is as interesting for what it reveals about how researchers approach the topic as it is for what it reveals about man's best friend.

This course will be an intensive review and critical analysis of the latest work on dog development, cognition and learning, supplemented by some of the classics and a guest appearance or two. We will cover the following topics:

- Wolf & Wild Canid Behavior
- Evolution and Development
- Perception
- Cue Understanding: attention, word and gesture
- Imitation & Social Learning
- Emotion
- Temperament
- Experimental design and analysis
- Implications

Part of each class will be led by Carolyn Barney, our TA and noted dog trainer, who will focus on the practical application of the material.

Finally, we will use this investigation to reflect more generally on how we think about cognition and learning in other animals, including ourselves.

This course is part of the Extension School's Distance Education Program. The lectures, which are given at Harvard each week, will be recorded and made available to all registered students via the Internet. Please see the distance education website for details on the program: http://www.extension.harvard.edu/distanceed

Readings

We will be reading substantial portions of the following books, and so I strongly recommend that you purchase them. They are available from the Harvard Coop, Amazon.com, or Dogwise.com:

We will also be reading a number of journal articles that are available electronically through the Harvard Libraries. You will be expected to access these articles via the Harvard Library e-journals website. I’ll give a demonstration of accessing the electronic journals during the first class.

There are several other books that I will be drawing from in my lectures. These are not required reading but I find them very useful in my studies.


Finally, for those of you who can’t pass by a good dog book, I recommend, Jensen, P. (2007) *The Behavioural Biology of Dogs*. CABI Publishing. 288 pages. This is a neat book that only came out in the last couple of months. I like the book because it has versions of many of the articles we will be discussing in class, but the versions tend to be more accessible than the original articles.

**Expectations**

You will get the most out of the course if you do all of the readings in advance of class, and spend some time reflecting on those readings so as to form your own opinion on the material. And of course, my fondest hope is that you will find the material so compelling that you will do additional reading to follow up on aspects of the work that are especially interesting and relevant to you. My expectation is that you will, of course, do the readings, watch or attend the lectures and be an active participant in the discussion forum.

There will be two short “open book, take-home” problem sets, and a (8-10 page) final paper. The problem sets are intended to help you firm up your understanding of the key concepts covered in class and in the readings. The final paper can be on a topic of your choice but must demonstrate your mastery of the material covered in class. If you are taking the course for graduate credit, the final paper should be of publishable quality.

Your grade will be based 50% on the final paper, 20% on each of the problem sets, and 10% on class participation as reflected by your participation on the on-line discussion board. The minimal level of participation over the course of the semester on the discussion board should be roughly equivalent to having written a 3 to 4 page paper. Indeed, if you are uncomfortable participating in the on-line discussion board, you may submit an additional 3 to 4 page paper in lieu of participation. That said, I urge everyone to participate in the discussion board, as it was an invaluable part of class last year.

The Harvard Extension School and I place great importance on academic honesty and therefore it is very important that you fully understand your responsibility with respect the appropriate use and attribution of sources. Please read *Writing with Sources* developed by Harvard's Expository Writing
Program ([http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources)) and religiously follow the guidelines contained therein.

With respect to the problem sets, I will grant an automatic extension of 1 week, no questions asked, if you request an extension prior to the due date for the assignment. With respect to the final paper, you must submit a formal request (available on the HES website) prior to the due date for an extension including the date by which the paper will be completed. Please note, I am not allowed to give a passing grade unless I receive a final paper from you, and I can not give you an incomplete unless I include a signed request for extension when I submit my grade sheet.

If you have a dog, they are more than welcome to watch the lectures on-line and help with any assignment. 😊 However, please do not bring your dog to class unless he/she is a certified assistance dog and you require their assistance.

**Syllabus**

**Class 1**  
Introduction: Savant or Slacker  
9/18

**Class 2**  
Setting the Stage  
9/25

**Class 3**  
Wolf and Wild Canid Behavior  
10/2
- Optional:

**Class 4**  
Perception & Communication in Wolves & Dogs  
10/9
- Optional:

**Class 5**  
Origins of the Dog, Part 1: Molecular Genetics  
10/16
- Optional:
Class 6  Origins of the Dog: Coppinger & Belyaev  10/23
• Optional:
  o Trut, L. (1999). Early Canid Domestication; The Farm Fox Experiment. American Scientist. 87: 160-169*

Class 7  Development  10/30

Class 8  Temperament  11/6

  ▪ Assignment 1 Due

Class 9  The Emotional Dog, Part 1  11/13
• Optional:

Class 10  The Emotional Dog, Part 2  11/20

Class 11  Social Cognition  12/4
• Optional:

Class 12  Simple but Reliable Rules  12/11
• Optional:


Class 13  Dogs and Words  12/18


* Assignment 2 Due

Class 14  Introduction to Learning Theory & Social Learning  1/8


- Optional:

Class 15  Dogs and People: Theory and Practice  1/15


- TBD

Class 16  Review and What’s Next  1/22

* Final Paper Due

Notes

* available via Harvard E-journals
** link: http://www2.vet.upenn.edu/research/centers/cias/publications.html