

COSNEWS

- [Subscribe](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Top News](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Awards](#)
- [Alumni](#)
- [Give](#)
- [Department](#)

- **Donate to the College of Sciences**

Learn more about donating to the college of sciences by clicking [here](#).

The Healing Power of Animals

Posted: August 4th, 2014 · Filled under: [Awards](#), [COS News](#), [News](#), [Sociology](#) · Comments Closed



Dr. Liz Grauerholz

The [American Sociological Association \(ASA\)](#) has presented UCF's Dr. Liz Grauerholz with the [Clifton Bryant Animals & Society Course Award](#). Spring 2014 Dr. Grauerholz launched a course she

developed that explores the ways in which non-human animals both enhance and diminish humans' health. The course is Animals and Health (SYO 3408) and was offered again during the Summer B 2014 session. The course is expected to be offered for the Spring 2015 semester.

“I didn't think that the course had a chance at winning this award since there are others in the country who are much more experienced than I teaching in this area, and this was the first time the course had ever been taught. . . When I heard that it had won the Clifton Bryant Course Award I was surprised, honored and thrilled. I'm very passionate about this topic so this award means more to me than others I have received in the past” said Dr. Grauerholz.

When asked about the inspiration behind creating Animals and Health (SYO 3408), Dr. Grauerholz told us “a colleague asked if I'd be interested in creating a new course for the Department's relatively new Medical Sociology minor. Because I'm not trained as a medical sociologist, I assumed I didn't have anything to contribute at first. Upon further reflection, however, I realized that I could indeed combine two passions of mine—health AND animals. And hence the course was born.”

The new course has not only encouraged Dr. Grauerholz's to share her love and knowledge health and animals, but ignited student's interest in the subject as well. “[The student's reactions have been] absolutely wonderful. I've taught many amazing classes at UCF but this was the highlight. Students came in with open minds and hearts. They learned about difficult topics such as the public health impacts of factory farming and the use of animals in medical research, and even though there were many different opinions and perspectives on these issues, everyone was respectful and open to learning. The students also started a Facebook group—Dr. G's Awesome Animals Class—and they continue to share information with each other there.”

Dr. Grauerholz spoke with us about her favorite section of her new course and the importance of its application in the sociological field. “[My favorite] would have to be ‘Animals and Therapy.’ We learned how non-human animals play a powerful role in healing humans. All sorts of emotional and physical problems can be healed through animal-assisted therapies. We had a guest speaker who was in law enforcement come to class with his therapy dog to talk about children who have been abused are more likely to talk about their experiences when the dog is present than when only humans are in the room. The human-animal bond can be very powerful.”

“[Winning the award] definitely taught me that when you teach about something you're passionate about, wonderful and unexpected things can happen. It has encouraged me to develop other courses, despite the tremendous amount of work it requires. The rewards are so great. It reminds me why I love teaching” said Dr. Grauerholz, on the impact the award has had on her career and research.

To be considered for the Clifton Bryant Animals & Society Course Award, ASA members must submit a nomination to the Awards Chair including the person's name, current curriculum vitae, copy of the course syllabus and a discussion of the nominee's distinguished contributions to undergraduate or graduate understandings of animals & society. (Self nominations are accepted.) Dr. Grauerholz was nominated for the award by former Sociology Department Chair, Dr. Jana Jasinski, now Associate Dean of the College of Graduate Studies.



Tags: [American Sociological Association](#), [Animals and Health](#), [animals and therapy](#), [Clifton Bryant Animals & Society Course Award](#), [Jana Jasinski](#), [Liz Grauerholz](#), [SYO 3408](#), [UCF](#), [University of Central Florida](#)

[Previous article](#)

[Next article](#)

Comments are closed.

© 2014 College of Sciences News. All images are copyrighted by their respective authors.