Detailed Course Syllabus

Academic year: 2026/2027	**Semester:** Winter semester
Year of study: 1	**Study programme:** Psihologija (R) (elective) (Diplomski)

I. BASIC COURSE INFORMATION

Name: Psychology of Human-Animal Bond	
Abbreviation: IZBD240	
ECTS: 4	**Code:** 249422
Prerequisites: No	
Total Course Workload	
Teaching Mode	**Total Hours**
Lecture	30
Seminar	15
Class Time and Place: HKS - according to the published schedule	

II. TEACHING STAFF

Course Holder

Name and Surname: Brkljačić Tihana

Academic Degree:	**Professional Title:** naslovni redoviti profesor
Contact E-mail: tihana.brkljacic@unicath.hr	**Telephone:**

Office Hours: According to the published schedule

Course Assistant

III. DETAILED COURSE INFORMATION

Teaching Language: English

Course Description	This course primarily focuses on psychology of keeping pets, by offering comprehensive overview of historical and cultural background of pet ownership as well as contemporary theories and research on psychology of human – pet relationship. A part of the course is concerned with providing adequate psychological support to various professionals who work with animals and/or owners. Finally, students will also be introduced to the basis of animal psychology per se, namely animal behavioral and cognitive processes and animal well-being, as well as ethical dilemmas and paradigms in the cultural background.

Educational Outcomes	Analyse the origins and history of human – pet bond. Evaluate the possible psychological and health benefits of keeping pets. Analyse the various stages in the human-pet relationship and related psychological processes. Interpret psychological aspects of animal training. Evaluate the psychological needs of professionals who work with animals. Propose adequate communication with pet owners in different situations. Evaluate basic facts about animal welfare and animal's emotions and cognitions.
Textbooks and Materials	
Required	1. Christopher Blazina, Güler Boyra, and David Shen-Miller (2011). The Psychology of the Human-Animal Bond, New York: Springer.
Supplementary	1. Adams, C.L., Frankel, R.M. (2007). It may be a dog's life but the relationship with her owners is also key to her health and wellbeing: communication in veterinary medicine. The Veterinary clinics of North America. Small animal practice, 37 1, 1-17. https://www.vetsmall.theclinics.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0195- 5616%2806%2900119-7 2. Bachi, K., Parish-Plass, N. (2016). Animal-assisted psychotherapy: A unique relational therapy for children and adolescents. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1359104516672549 3. Bert, F., et al. (2016). Animal assisted intervention: A systematic review of benefits and risks. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7185850/ 4. Christian, H., Mitrou, F., Cunneen, R., Zubrick, S. R. (2020). Pets are associated with fewer peer problems and emotional symptoms, and better prosocial behavior: Findings from the longitudinal study of Australian children. Journal of Pediatrics,220, 200–206.e2. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2020.01.012 5. Jitka, P., Ann, B., Christina, V. (2014). Does owning a pet protect older people against loneliness? BMC Geriatrics,14, 106. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2318-14-106 6. Mendl, M., Burman, O.H.P.,Paul, E.S. (2010). An integrative and functional framework for the study of animal emotion and mood. Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences. 277:2895–904. doi: 10.1098/Rspb.2010.0303 7. Odendaal, J. S. (2000). Animal-assisted therapy-magic or medicine? Journal of Psychosomatic Research,49(4), 275–280. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0022- 3999(00)00183-5 8. Unnati, G. H.,Jayasankara, R. (2020). Why companion animals are beneficial during COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of Patient Experience,7(4),430–432. https://doi.org/10.1177/2374373520938904 9. Wanser S.H., Vitale K.R., Thielke L.E., Brubaker L., Udell M.A.R. (2019). Spotlight on the psychological basis of childhood pet attachment and its implications. Psychology Research and Behavior Management, 12:469-479 https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S158998

Examination and Grading

To Be Passed DA	**Exclusively Continuous Assessment** NE	**Included in Average Grade** DA
Prerequisites to Obtain Signature and Take Final Exam		

Examination Manner	**sufficient (2)** – 51% **good (3)** – 66% **very good (4)** 81% **excellent (5)** 91%
Grading Manner	**Teaching activities**: lectures, workshops, partial e-learning, demonstration, discussions, case studies, multimedia, problem solving. **Final exam:** no

Detailed Overview of Grading within ECTS

ACTIVITY TYPE	ECTS Student Workload Coefficient	GRADE PERCENTAGE (%)
Class attendance	0,6	10%
Seminars	1,2	30%
Individual assignments	1,2	30%
Group project	1,2	30%
Total in Class	**4**	**100%**
TOTAL ECTS (Classes + Final Exam)	**4**	**100%**

IV. WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE

[Predavanja]

#	Topic
1	History of keeping pets in human societies.
2	Psychology behind keeping pets.
3	Human attachment to a pet, human-animal bond, Anthropomorphism of a pet.

4	Cross-cultural differences in attitudes towards pets.
5	Psychological and Physical Well-being of pet owners (unconditional love, Basic psychological need fulfilment in human–pet relationships, pet-friendly work practices).
6	Value of pets through human lifespan (childhood, adolescence, adulthood and parenthood, old age).
7	Pets and animals in individual's and global crises.
8	Acquiring a pet (making decision, choosing a pet, adapting to a life with a pet).
9	Aging, illness and death of a pet (dealing with pet's illness and pet's death).
10	Work and therapeutic animals.
11	Training a pet, disorders in pet's behaviour, prevention, recognition and dealing with abnormal pet behaviour.
12	Communication with pet's owners (aimed to psychologists, veterinarians).
13	Providing psychological training and support for professionals (e.g. pet trainers, veterinarians, police officers).
14	Animal welfare: pet abuse, neglect, the ethics of human relationships with (companion) animals.
15	Animals' cognition and emotions.
[Seminari]	
#	**Topic**
1	Seminars on the topic of history of keeping pets in human societies.
2	Seminars on the topic of psychology of keeping pets.
3	Seminars on the topic of human - pet attachment.
4	Seminars on the topic of cross-cultural differences in keeping pets.
5	Seminars on the topic of physical and psychological well-being of pet owners.
6	Seminars on the topic of differences in human – pet relationship throughout human lifespan.
7	Seminars on the topic of role of pets and animals in individual's and global crises.
8	Seminars on the topic of psychological aspects of acquiring a pet.
9	Seminars on the topic of dealing with aging, illness and death of a pet.
10	Seminars on the topic of work and therapeutic animals.
11	Seminars on the topic of training a pet, disorders in pet's behaviour, prevention, recognition and dealing with abnormal pet behaviour.
12	Seminars on the topic of communication with pet's owners.
13	Seminars on the topic of psychological training and support for professionals who work with animals.
14	Seminars on animal welfare.
15	Seminars on animals' cognition and emotions.