



*ONE WORLD,*

*ONE MEDICINE,*

*ONE HEALTH*

# One Health Intellectual Exchange

*Weekly Discussions / Course: Philosophy to Practical Integration of  
Human, Animal and Environmental Health*

(Available each spring for credit if desired)

11th 2014 Weekly Session - Tuesday, March 25th  
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

## **The Healing Power of Pets: Fact, Fiction, or Somewhere in Between?**

Hal Herzog, PhD  
Professor, Department of Psychology  
Western Carolina University

AND

## **“Demon Dogs” or Panicked Public?: A History of Breed Scares Through the Ages**

Bronwen Dickey  
Essayist and Journalist  
Contributing Editor at *The Oxford American*

Meets Tuesdays, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the North Carolina Biotechnology Center  
15 T.W. Alexander Drive Research Triangle Park, NC 27709      Directions: [www.ncbiotech.org/directions](http://www.ncbiotech.org/directions)

For more information on the course option, suggestions, or ideas contact NC OHC: [nconehealth@gmail.com](mailto:nconehealth@gmail.com)

For Speaker Cancellation notices and additional background on One Health and the NC OHC:  
<http://nconehealthcollaborative.weebly.com/index.htm>      <http://onehealtheducation.blogspot.com/>





**Hal Herzog** has been investigating aspects of human-animal relationships for over 20 years. His research has included studies of the psychology of animal activism, the decision processes of animal care and use committees, gender differences in attitudes toward animals, and impact of pets on human health and well-being. His articles have appeared in many journals including *Science*, the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, *PLOS One*, and the *American Psychologist*, and in news outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *New Scientist*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. He is the author of *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard To Think Straight About Animals* (Harper, 2010), and he writes the blog *Animals and Us* for *Psychology Today* magazine. In 2013, he was the recipient of the International Society of Anthrozoology Distinguished Scholar Award. He is Professor of Psychology at Western Carolina

University.

### **Abstract:**

Fueled by media reports extolling the medical and psychological benefits of companion animal ownership, large segments of the public now believe that pet owners are healthier, happier, and longer-lived than non-pet owners. This phenomenon has been referred to as “the pet effect.” Statements assuming the positive health effects of pet ownership are also common in journal articles on human-animal interactions. Here I argue that both journalists and researchers tend to ignore studies which have reported no health benefits of living with pets or that pet owners were actually worse off than non-pet owners. I discuss reasons for these mixed results. These including poor research design, the file drawer effect, and researcher bias. Finally, I argue that the notion that “pets are good for people” remains an unconfirmed hypothesis rather than an established fact.

### **Recommended Readings:**

Allen, K. (2003). Are pets a healthy pleasure? The influence of pets on blood pressure. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(6), 236-239.

Parslow, R. A. & Jorm, A. F. (2003). Pet ownership and risk factors for cardiovascular disease: another look. *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 179(9), 466-468.

Levine, G. N., Allen, K., Braun, L. T., Christian, H. E., Friedmann, E., Taubert, K. A., ... & Lange, R. A. (2013). Pet Ownership and cardiovascular risk: A scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*, 127(23), 2353-2363.



**Bronwen Dickey** is a contributing editor at The Oxford American and the author of an as yet untitled social history of pit bull dogs, forthcoming from Alfred A. Knopf (NY) in 2015. Her essays and journalism have appeared in Houghton Mifflin's Best American Travel Writing 2009, Newsweek, Outside, The San Francisco Chronicle, and The Independent Weekly, among other publications. A graduate of Duke University and Columbia University, she is the 2009 recipient of a firstplace Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Award and a MacDowell Colony residency grant. She lives in North Carolina.

**Abstract:**

Dobermans. German shepherds. Pit bulls. Rottweilers. Chances are, you've probably seen at least one or two snarling images of these dogs in the press, in film, or on television. But did you know that during the 1870s, the most feared dog in America—and the first to be legally banned—was...the Pomeranian? Or that the Victorians considered "mongrels" to be more "savage" than purebreds? As long as there have been dog breeds, there have been dog breed panics. More often than not, these scares stem from human anxieties about particular social groups. American plantation owners decried the depredations of "slaves' curs" and sought to have them outlawed, for example, while their abolitionist foes feared the "Cuban bloodhounds" that starred in the popular stage plays of Uncle Tom's Cabin. The popularity of the Rin Tin Tin films made the German shepherd much beloved in the United States, but over in Europe, the prisoners of Hitler's concentration camps saw the animals as instruments of evil. Given that all dogs share 99.8% of their genetic material and the vast majority of America's 83 million dogs almost never cause serious harm to humans, why do today's stories of "killer canines" keep cycling through the press? Is there any scientific basis for declaring entire breeds dangerous? And what effect does the media's fixation on dog deviance have on public policy, public health, and the future of human animal bond? In short: Do these panics really tell us anything about dogs, or do they reveal more about us?

**Recommended Readings:**

Lodge, Martin, and Christopher Hood. "Pavlovian policy responses to media feeding frenzies? Dangerous dogs regulation in comparative perspective." *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 10.1 (2002): 113.

Patronek, Gary J., et al. "Cooccurrence of potentially preventable factors in 256 dog bite-related fatalities in the United States (2000–2009)." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 243.12 (2013): 17261736.

Ritvo, Harriet. "Pride and pedigree: the evolution of the Victorian dog fancy." *Victorian Studies* (1986): 227253.

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