



Understanding Dogs (Animals Culture And Society)

Clinton Sanders

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Can people have authentic social relationships with speechless animals? What does your dog mean to you, your understanding of yourself, and your perceived and actual relationships with others and the world? What do you mean to your dog? In *Understanding Dogs*, sociologist and faithful dog companion Clinton R. Sanders explores the day-to-day experiences of living and working with domestic dogs. Based on a decade of research in veterinary offices and hospitals, dog guide training schools, and obedience classes -- and colored with his personal experiences and observations at and outside home with his own canine companions -- Sanders's book examines how everyday dog owners come to know their animal companions as thinking, emotional, and responsive individuals. Linking animal companionship with social as well as personal identity, *Understanding Dogs* uses detailed ethnographic data in viewing human and animal efforts to understand, manipulate, care for, and interact with each other. From nineteenth-century disapproval of what was seen as irresponsibly indulgent pet ownership among the poor to Bill Clinton's caring and fun-loving image and populist connection to the common person as achieved through his Labrador companion Buddy, Sanders looks at how dogs serve not only as social facilitators but also as adornments to social identity. He also reveals how, while we often strive to teach and shape our dogs' behavior, dogs often teach us to appreciate with more awareness a nourishing meal, physical warmth, a walk in the woods, and the simple joys of the immediate moment. Sanders devotes chapters to the specialized work of guide dog trainers; the problems and joys experienced by guide dog owners; the day-to-day work of veterinarians dealing with the healing, death, and euthanizing of their animal patients; and the everyday interactions, assumptions, and approaches of people who choose, for various reasons and in various ways, to spend their lives in the company of dogs. *Understanding Dogs* will interest those who live and work with animals as well as those studying the sociology of human-animal interactions.

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