

Learning and Behavior: PSY 317

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Office Hours: by appointment

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs: Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations should discuss these needs with their professors during the first two weeks of class. Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations should contact Academic Services.

Textbook: *Introduction to Learning and Behavior*, by Powell, Symbaluk and MacDonald (Thompson Wadsworth)

What is this course about?

Our behavior is controlled by many elements. What we do is constrained by our genetic endowment, and altered by our unique experiences. This course will examine how our 'nature' and 'nurture' interact to shape our behavior, ultimately providing an understanding of the factors which influence how and what we do, and hopefully shed some light on why we do it. We will also examine how human behavior is controlled by environmental influences, and will use this theme to ultimately address the issue of how much free-will people actually have. To succeed in this course, it will be important for you to be able to apply the concepts being discussed to real-world problems and issues.

Schedule

Order of topics to be covered (Dates are tentative. We will attempt to stay as close to this schedule as possible).

Topics

Science and Psychology
Evolution and Natural Selection
What is Learning?
The nature of inferences
Non-Associative Learning
Intro to Classical Conditioning
Higher order relations in CC
Eliminating Conditioned reflexes
Introduction to Operant Behavior; Ways of Acquiring Operant Behavior
Theories of Reinforcement
Factors affecting Operant Behavior
Reinforcement schedules
Stimulus Control of behavior
Punishment and avoidance

Assessment:

There will be several different types of assignments upon which your grade will be based. These include 1) several portfolios of original examples illustrating key concepts and terms, lab assignments, exams/quizzes, and class participation. Each will be briefly described.

1. Portfolios (20%): You will be required to submit 2 portfolios including "original examples" illustrating key concepts covered in the course. There are many places in which you can find these examples, including:

- passages from books, magazines, or newspapers
- song lyrics and paintings
- comics and cartoons
- film or television scenes
- real life experiences (not contrived life experiences)

Each example should include a typed explanation of how it illustrates your target concept. I will provide you with several examples of portfolios using Blackboard.

2. Lab Assignments (25%)

Through the semester, we will be doing several labs (in and out of the class). Included in these will be a classical conditioning lab (3%), an operant learning lab (3%), a discrimination lab (3%), a behavior modification exercise (6%), and a semester-long project/poster presentation (10%). Each lab will come with specific instructions, as well as questions that must be answered and submitted. Labs may be done in groups (with the exception of the behavior modification project), but assignments must be submitted individually. The semester-long project must be done in groups of 3 or 4 students, and will be presented as a poster in the final class, as well as an individual research report.

Grades for the poster will be based on the following criteria:

- 20%- creativity of project/work ethic
- 15%- adherence to APA format/aesthetics
- 20%- Appropriate development of the theory underlying the project
- 30%- methods/results
- 15%- discussion

3. Exams (55%)

Quiz 1: 10% Sept 10

Quiz 2: 15% Oct 1

Quiz 3: 15% Nov. 5

Final: 15% (note: the final may be 'quasi-cumulative, i.e., I will repeat several questions from quizzes 1, 2, and 3 on it.

Exams are based on material covered in class, and the occasional assigned reading (I'll be explicit as to which pages will be covered).

4. Participation (-5% to +5%). If you add up the points for portfolios, labs, and exams, they already add up to 100% of the grade. In rare instances, participation (or lack thereof) can change your grade to a small extent. For the most part, perfect attendance and occasionally participation leaves your grade unchanged. Behavior that is disruptive can result in a slight lowering of your grade, and exemplary engagement with the material (such that it improves the learning environment for other students in the class) can result in a slight increase.

Presentation Policy

I expect all submitted work to be your finest effort. As such, presentation counts! All submitted work must be typed and legible (low toner is not an excuse). Proofread and spell-check (two words which are knot cinnamons) everything you submit. I will subtract up to 50% of your grade for shoddy work. Work submitted late will be assessed a 10% per calendar day late penalty.

Cell Phone Policy

If your cell phone goes off during class, I reserve the right to embarrass you. If you are expecting an important call, let me know before class starts

Working with other students

I actively encourage students working together outside of class on their **portfolios**. In fact, I prefer it when students can 'pair up' for their submission. The two people submitting the work will share the same grade. Thus, make sure that should you select a partner that she/he has a similar work ethic to yours.

Grades:

- A Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- B Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- C Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
- D Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
- F Work did not reach the level worthy of credit

Numerical designations will be as follows:

A: 93%	A-: 90%	B+: 87%	B: 83%	B-: 80%
C+: 77%	C: 73%	C-: 70%	D: 60%	F: <60%

If plagiarism or cheating is suspected, I am bound to follow college regulations and policies. Given several disciplinary choices, I tend to fall on the more 'severe' end of the spectrum for pedagogical reasons.

Psychology Department Attendance Policy: The Psychology Department is committed to the principle that regular and punctual class attendance is essential to the students' optimum learning and successful academic achievement. Regular class attendance is a student obligation, and students are responsible for all work, tests and written assignments. Therefore, students are expected to be present for all class sessions. The Psychology Department's attendance policy recognizes that there will be times when attendance at class is not possible. You may think of the policy as being similar to the type used in the corporate world where each employee is given a certain number of "personal/sick days." Based on the number of regularly scheduled class meetings, you will be allowed a certain number of absences (see below) with no consequences, no questions asked. In other words, there is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. You are of course responsible for anything covered during those missed classes, and for submitting assignments on time, regardless of whether or not you attend. Beyond the allowable number of absences, there are consequences that will adversely impact your grade, much as missing too many days of work can adversely impact your employment status. Above all else, you should carefully consider each decision to not attend class, as once your allotted absences have been used, they are gone. *It is important that students arrive for class on time. Late arrivals are very distracting, not only to the instructor, but also to fellow students. Repeated late arrivals are not acceptable and will be addressed on an individual basis.* It is each student's responsibility to understand this policy and to keep track of absences throughout the semester.

Application to this Class: Formal attendance will be taken during all class sessions. This class meets once per week (14 class meetings). As such, you may miss 2 classes without penalty. If you miss 3 classes, your final grade (cumulative percentage of points) will be lowered by 5%. That means that if you have earned 84% of the available points in the class, which is a B grade, you would be lowered to 79%, which is a C+. Likewise, if you have earned 77% of the points available, the penalty would take you down to 72%, which is a C-. As a reminder, a C grade (73%) is required in all Psychology courses. If you miss 4 classes, you will receive a failing grade for the course. If you miss four classes, you have missed approximately 25% of the class meetings.