

9-2013

PSYX 270S.50: Fundamentals of the Psychology of Learning

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Recommended Citation

Lamp, Kathryn, "PSYX 270S.50: Fundamentals of the Psychology of Learning" (2013). *Syllabi*. 74.
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Syllabus

Psychology 270 Fundamentals of the Psychology of Learning Autumn Semester 2013

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	Department URL - www.umt.edu/psych

Course Objectives

There are two primary goals of this course: 1) familiarize students with current knowledge and theory regarding learning processes, both elementary and complex and 2) expose students to the types of research methods used in investigating learning phenomena.

The major topics to be covered include habituation, sensitization, Pavlovian conditioning, instrumental & operant learning, vicarious learning, stimulus control, schedules of reinforcement, limits of learning, and basic animal cognition.

The course emphasizes current theoretical and experimental investigations of learning processes as well as some exposure to current theories in animal cognition. While much of the research presented is based on non-human animals, this is not to suggest the application of these processes will not extend to humans. In fact, many of the basic learning processes extend throughout the animal kingdom, with differences being due to the interaction of the animal's evolutionary history, nervous system architecture, and ecology.

Course Assignments & Grading Criteria

Important: For the purposes of this course, the week will **begin** on Mondays and **end** on Sundays. You will have the entire week to complete both the weekly quiz and the weekly discussions.

Assignments for this class include quizzes and discussions.

Quizzes

The week 1 quiz is comprised of 5 multiple-choice (1 point each) and 5 essay questions (5 points each) and is worth 30 points total. For the remainder of the weeks, the weekly quiz is comprised of 20 multiple-choice and 10 True/False items (1 point each) and is worth a total of 30 points. This assignment tests your knowledge of the reading material for the current week. You are only allowed one attempt for each quiz so please read the assigned readings before attempting to complete the quizzes.

Discussions

Doing well on the Discussion Board assignment requires consistent and detailed participation each week and is the participation and essay portion of the course. Grades are based on (1) attendance and (2) quality of your posts and do not include any posts made in the “Q & A” or “Welcome” Discussions. Full credit requires high quality and maximum frequency posts. The two charts below explain how your discussion posts are graded.

<u>ATTENDANCE GRADING (30 points possible)</u>		
Students must post (respond) a <u>minimum of three separate days per week</u> . You can post more than three days, and post more than three times, but at a minimum, you must post on three separate days.	3 days	30 points
	2 days	20 points
	1 day	10 points
	0 days	0 points

Once the number of days is calculated, students are then graded based on their contributions to the discussion. The following points are deducted, not added, from the points earned above, to yield a final weekly “attendance” score. (Students cannot earn negative points. The lowest score is a zero.)

Students must make a post to EACH discussion question (DQ) in the weekly discussion forum.	2 DQ's	0 pts lost
	1 DQ	3 pts lost
	0 DQ's	6 pts lost
Each week DQ#1 post is due by Wednesday, and DQ#2 post is due by Friday.	Each day late	2 pts lost
Students must post (respond) to a <u>minimum of four of their peers</u> . You can post to more than four, but at a minimum, you must reply to 4 of your peers. This promotes student engagement with each other, rather than just responding to the DQ's posted by the instructor	4 peers	0 pts lost
	3 peers	1 pt lost
	2 peers	2 pts lost
	1 peer	3 pts lost
	0 peers	4 pts lost

Once I have calculated your final weekly “attendance” score, then I grade the quality of your posts, as explained below. Again, the following points are deducted, not added, from the final weekly “attendance” score, to yield a final weekly “Discussion” score. (Students cannot earn negative points. The lowest score is a zero.)

<u>QUALITY GRADING</u>		
Students must to make detailed and thoughtful posts that reflect an appropriate application of emerging knowledge and vocabulary in the topic area. Each post must add value to the discussion and be related to the required readings for the week. Below are additional details of how I grade the quality of your posts.	Superior	0 pts lost
	Above Average	3 pts lost
	Average	6 pts lost
	Below Average	9 pts lost
	Unacceptable	12 pts lost

Superior: Your contributions demonstrate a complete mastery of the materials assigned. Your responses might integrate multiple views and/or show strong analysis and reflection on topics and other student’s posts. You provide evidence that you are reading the assigned materials and other student postings and are responding accordingly, bringing out interesting interpretations. You know the facts and are able to analyze them, apply them to real life scenarios and handle conceptual ideas. It is highly unlikely that you could get full credit in less than two paragraphs.

Above Average: Your responses build on the ideas of other participants and dig deeper into assignment questions or issues. When you make intelligent posts during the week, including some good critique of the course material, then you have demonstrated you have an understanding of the material, are reading posts of your colleagues, and are contributing to the class. Your posts demonstrate confidence with the materials, but may be just a bit off target in one area or another.

Average: You have meaningful interaction with other participants' postings. Posts that state, “I agree” or “I disagree” and include a detailed explanation of what is disagreed or agreed upon and why, or introduce a perspective or concept that adds to the discussion. However, you may have rambling, lengthy posts with no clear point, your writing has a lack of clarity and comprehension, or there are considerable typos and grammatical errors.

Below Average: You answer questions asked by me or other students but do not expand upon your response or you answer questions based only on your opinion, rather than on research or proper evidence. Your posts are unusually short (one paragraph or less) and you fail to demonstrate a clear working knowledge of the material covered for the week.

Unacceptable: You will receive little credit in the week's discussion by just showing up and making trivial comments, without adding any new thought to the discussion. At the low end of the spectrum, no participation gets a "0." If you are not in the discussion, you do not earn any points. Comments such as “I agree” or other one-sentence responses will result in zero points. Copying and pasting from a website without providing your own substantial insight is also an unacceptable post- even if you have properly cited your sources. This assignment is an assessment of your understanding of the information covered in this class. Copying and pasting from websites does not demonstrate a working knowledge of the material.

Special Note: I check very carefully for plagiarism in the discussion posts. If you have plagiarized, you will get a zero for the entire assignment. If you plagiarize a second time, you will fail the course. If you engage in flaming behavior in the posts, you will get a zero for the entire assignment.

Course Grading:

Your final grade for the course will consist of scores on weekly quizzes, discussion posts, and lab exercises. Your final grade is the percentage of the total points earned divided by total possible points. There is no course curve in this class.

The following chart breaks down the points for each assignment type.

Quizzes (15 each, at 30 pts ea)	450 points possible
Discussion Posts (15 each, at 30 pts ea)	450 points possible
Total Points	900 points possible

The following chart shows the Grade scale for the Final Course grade.

Final Course Grade	# Points	Percentage
A	806 - 900	89.5% - 100%
B	716 - 805	79.5% - 89.4%
C	626 - 715	69.5% - 79.4%
D	536 - 625	59.5% - 69.4%
F	0 - 535	< 59.5%

Important Dates to Remember

Monday, Sept. 2nd - Labor Day (No classes)

Wednesday, Sept. 4th - Last Day to ADD classes via Cyberbear without consent

Monday, November 11th - Veteran's Day (No classes)

*****Additional Dates regarding adding/dropping classes can be found on the Registrar's website and/or the Academic Calendar on the UM website*****

Units	Readings	Quizzes & Discussions
Week 1 (8/26 – 9/1) How to be an Online Student	1. Netiquette Guidelines 2. Online Learning Questionnaire 3. Study Habits Questionnaire 4. Time Management Calendar	Week 1 Discussion Week 1 Quiz
Week 2 (9/2 – 9/8) Learning to Change	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 1	Week 2 Discussion Week 2 Quiz
Week 3 (9/9 – 9/15) The Study of Learning & Behavior	Learning & Behavior, Chapter 2	Week 3 Discussion Week 3 Quiz
Week 4 (9/16 – 9/22) Pavlovian Conditioning	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 3	Week 4 Discussion Week 4 Quiz
Week 5 (9/23 – 9/29) Pavlovian Applications	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 4	Week 5 Discussion Week 5 Quiz
Week 6 (9/30 – 10/6) Reinforcement	Learning & Behavior, Chapter 5	Week 6 Discussion Week 6 Quiz
Week 7 (10/7 – 10/13) Schedules of Reinforcement	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 6	Week 7 Discussion Week 7 Quiz
Week 8 (10/14 – 10/20) Punishment	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 7	Week 8 Discussion Week 8 Quiz
Week 9 (10/21 – 10/27) Operant Applications and Interpretations	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 8	Week 9 Discussion Week 9 Quiz
Week 10 (10/28 – 11/3) Operant Applications and Interpretations	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 8- Supplementary Articles	Week 10 Discussion Week 10 Quiz
Week 11 (11/4 – 11/10) Observational Learning	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 9	Week 11 Discussion Week 11 Quiz
Week 12 (11/11 – 11/17) Generalization, Discrimination, and Stimulus Control	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 10	Week 12 Discussion Week 12 Quiz
Week 13 (11/18 – 11/24) Memory & Forgetting	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 11	Week 13 Discussion Week 13 Quiz
Week 14 (11/25 – 12/1) THANKSGIVING BREAK	(NO READINGS THIS WEEK)	(BREAK!!!)
Week 15 (12/2 - 12/8) The Limits of Learning	Learning and Behavior, Chapter 12	Week 15 Discussion Week 15 Quiz
Week 16 (12/9 – 12/15) FINALS WEEK	TBA	TBA

Course Policies

Announcements

Students are responsible for all announcements made in class. These may include changes in policy, due dates, or assignment requirements. Announcements are posted in the announcements section of the course or are directly emailed to the students.

Technology Policies

Please contact UM Online if you experience technical difficulties. Though I would love to be able to help, I am not qualified to do so. **Critical Note: I do not allow technical issues or not having the proper software as reasons for late or incomplete work.** To ensure your own protection, please keep technical support contact information available offline and please do not wait until the last minute to complete your work each week! To access technical support (and save their contact information offline) please click on the "Tech Support" link to the left of the page.

Technical Alternatives

Also, keep in mind your technical alternatives if you have computer difficulties. If you live near the University, campus computers are an option. Otherwise, consider the public library, an internet café, a computer at work, or a friend or family member's computer. Have a plan of action in mind so that you can complete the required work each week if an issue arises.

System and Software Requirements

Please refer to the UMonline web page that lists downloads and plug-ins that they may need to complete your course: <http://umonline.umt.edu/StudentInfo/plugins.htm>

Assignment Due Dates, Late Work, and Make-up Work

Assignments are due every week on Sunday by 11:59 pm MST. Please be sure to start your assignments early enough to complete them by the time the week closes.

As a rule, I do not accept late work or allow make up work, except for one "freebie". No reason is required to take advantage of this opportunity, and it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to make this happen. Students have 24 hours to make up the work from the time I send the make-up assignment email, and students are not permitted to use the "freebie" at any time during finals week. Aside from this one freebie, no extra points will be given and no extra credit will be assigned.

Students cannot, under any circumstance, make up the discussion posts assignment. Due to the interactive nature of this assignment, students must be engaged in this process throughout the week each week in order to receive credit.

To make up multiple missed assignments it is mandatory that you (1) notify your Instructor before the time of the assignment and (2) provide proper documentation verifying the reason for your absence. Examples of proper documentation include a medical note or a death or family emergency. Remember, prior notification and documentation is mandatory! You can provide documentation by (a) scanning and emailing the documents, (2) mailing the documents, or (3) bringing them by my office during office hours. I do not allow students to make up work until I have received the proper documents. I do not allow make

up work during the week of final exams.

Grades of Incomplete

Departmental and university policies regarding incompletes do not allow changing “incomplete” grades after one year has passed since the “I” was granted.

Academic Misconduct

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/vpsa/index.cfm/page/2585>.

Plagiarism

The Student Conduct Code discusses plagiarism. However, it is a serious offense worth re-mentioning. This course requires students to adhere to APA format when citing, paraphrasing, or referencing sources. If you have plagiarized, either intentionally or accidentally, you will receive a zero on the entire assignment. If you plagiarize a second time, you will fail the course.

Netiquette

Students must engage in proper “netiquette”. Netiquette, or “network etiquette” is a professional and mannerly way of communicating with others in the online medium. Failure to engage in proper netiquette will result in earning a zero for each assignment where an incident has occurred.

Disabilities and Special Learning Needs

It is your responsibility to inform your Instructor, at the outset of this course, of any disability and the ways that you and the DSS have determined are necessary to accommodate your needs. Please contact UM's DSS for more information (<http://life.umt.edu/dss/>).

Dropping/Adding/Changing grade option

Please refer to the Registrar's website on these policies: <http://www.umt.edu/registrar/students/dropadd.aspx>