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PSYX 270.02: Fundamentals of the Psychology of Learning

Susan M. Greene

University of Montana, Missoula

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PSYX 270 – Fundamentals of the Psychology of Learning Syllabus

Spring Semester 2016

Instructor Information

Instructor: Susan Greene

Office: Skaggs 004

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday from 1:30-3 pm

Email: susan.greene@umontana.edu

Required Text

Introduction to Learning & Behavior (4th Ed) Powell, Honey, & Symbalux

Course Objectives

There are three primary goals of this course: 1) familiarize students with current knowledge and theory regarding learning processes, both elementary and complex, 2) expose students to the types of research methods used in investigating learning phenomena, and 3) gain a broader understanding of how learning processes impact everyday aspects of our lives.

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.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able to

1. describe typical research methods used to study learning
2. describe Classical conditioning and important phenomena related to Classical conditioning
3. describe Instrumental conditioning and important phenomena related to Instrumental conditioning
4. describe current theories used to explain Classical and Instrumental conditioning processes
5. apply Classical and Instrumental conditioning in "real world" situations
6. explain the adaptive value of learning

Exams

There will be 3 midterm exams and a comprehensive final. Each exam, including the final, will be worth 50 points and will consist of 30 multiple choice items (1 pt each) and 1 short answer essay question (20 pts). You will be allowed to drop the lowest exam score of the four exams (including

the final) and use the three highest exam scores for the calculation of your final grade. See the tentative reading schedule for exam dates.

Both lecture and book material will be covered on each exam in approximately equal proportions. As a general rule the multiple choice items will be drawn primarily from the text while the essay questions will be taken mostly from the lecture materials. **Critical Note:** You will be expected to read and study the assigned textbook chapters. My lectures will not cover all the material in the readings that will be used to create the exams.

Requests for reevaluation/re-scoring of test items (essays in particular) will be accepted until the date of the next exam.

Makeup exams will NOT be given except under unusual circumstances. This issue always becomes particularly sticky regarding the time and date for the final exam. Please note that we will adhere to the date published in the course schedule for the final exam. I will not give early finals except for **very** unusual circumstances.

Course Guidelines and Policies

General Behavior

All students are expected to be present in class, with all required/necessary materials at the specified class start time. Also, respect for your fellow students and instructor are a must, and any student who continually shows disrespectful behavior, such as name calling, intentional distracting from the material, threatening behavior, etc, will be asked to leave the classroom.

In addition, if you have to leave class early please notify me ahead of time if possible. If an emergency occurs during class and you need to take a phone call or leave class, please try to do without causing too much distraction.

Feel free to ask any questions during class, and I will answer them to the best of my ability. Finally, if you need to meet with, or have an issue to discuss about the class, come to my office hours or make an appointment with me after class or through email.

Attendance

Attendance is not mandatory in this class, but it is highly encouraged.

Electronic Devices (Cell Phones/Tablets/Laptops)

Electronic devices are permitted as long as they are being used for class related activities. Such activities include taking notes, viewing textbooks/supplements, etc. Any unrelated uses of cell phones include phone calls during class, texting of any kind (Facebook messaging included here), use of the internet, games, movies etc. If frequent misuse of electronic devices becomes a problem then you may be asked to either leave the device at home, or leave class.

If you are an emergency professional (nurse, counselor, EMT, etc) or expecting an emergency message of some kind, please set your devices to silent and silently exit the room to respond.

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](#).

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.

Disability Modifications

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students](#). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or call 406-243-2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Dropping/Adding/Changing grade option

Please refer to the [Registrar's Office webpage](#) for information and policies.

Grading

Grades will be assigned using the adjacent performance criteria for all exams and final course grade. I will NOT be using the "+/-" grading system. All grades of "Incomplete" will adhere strictly to university [Academic Policies and Procedures](#).

Grade scale

Grade	Course total
A	135 - 150
B	120 - 134
C	105 - 119
D	90 - 104
F	0 – 89

Quizzes

Extra credit quizzes will be available on Moodle for each chapter. You will have until the night before each exam to take the quizzes for the chapters on the exam.

Exams

There will be four exams. Each exam will consist of 30 multiple choice questions and one short essay. You will have the entire class period to complete the exam. The lowest test score will be dropped.

Date	Tuesdays	Thursdays
Jan 26 and 28	Chapter 1	
Feb 2 and 4	Chapter 2	
Feb 9 and 11	Chapter 3	
Feb 16 and 18	Chapter 4	
Feb 23 and 25	Chapter 5	
Mar 1 and 3	Test 1 (Chapters 1 through 5)	Review Test
Mar 8 and 10	Chapter 6	
Mar 15 and 17	Chapter 7	
Mar 22 and 24	Chapter 8	
Mar 29 and 31	Chapter 9	
Apr 5 and 7	Spring Break	
Apr 12 and 14	Test 2 (Chapters 6 through 9)	Review Test
Apr 19 and 21	Chapter 10	Chapter 12
Apr 26 and 28	Chapter 13	
May 3 and 5	Test 3 (Chapters 10, 12, and 13)	Review Test
Finals Week	Comprehensive Final Exam	