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PSYX 270.01: Fundamental Psychology of Learning

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PSYX 270 – Fundamentals of Learning Syllabus Spring 2018

Course Information

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 10:00am-10:50am
SS 358

Instructor information

Instructor: Bethany Gorter
Office: Skaggs Building-235
Email: bethany.gorter@umontana.edu
Office hours: Monday 11am to 2pm

Required textbooks

- **Introduction to Learning & Behavior** (4th edition) – Powell, Honey, & Symbaluk

Course description and 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) provide simulations of classic learning processes, and 3) expose students to the types of research methods used to investigate learning phenomena.

The major topics to be covered include habituation, sensitization, classical conditioning, instrumental & operant conditioning, 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 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 60 points and will consist of 30 multiple choice items (1 pt each) and 3 short answer questions (10 points each). You will be expected to provide well-thought out answers to these short answer questions.

Both lecture and book material will be covered on each exam. Preference will be given for information touched on in lecture. 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: My lectures cover material that is not in the textbook. You will be held responsible for this material on 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.

Extra Credit

There will be **optional** quizzes on Moodle for each chapter. Each quiz is worth 1 extra credit point for a total of 12 possible extra credit points over the course of the semester. These quizzes are designed to help you check your knowledge and help you practice the types of questions that will appear on the test. As a result, the scoring is adaptive so that you can attempt a question multiple times with small point penalties for each incorrect answer. Quizzes will open at the beginning of each section and will close the day of the test.

Course guidelines and policies

General behavior

As a university student, certain behavior is expected of you. Most importantly, it is your responsibility to meet the requirements of this course.

You may expect me to be in the classroom on time, prepared & organized, and open to discussion/questions pertaining to the day's subject material. I will expect you to be in the classroom on time, to be awake and attentive, to participate in demonstrations/discussions, and to be respectful toward the instructor and other students.

I understand there will be circumstances beyond your control that, on occasion, will require you to leave class early. Please plan accordingly by notifying me at the beginning of class and choose seating that will result in minimal disruption.

You should feel free to ask any questions in class. Also, please feel free to see the instructor about any classroom issue during office hours.

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

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 [Student Conduct Code](#).

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.

Attendance

While attendance is not required it is HIGHLY recommended. Note that any changes in the reading or exam schedule will be announced in class and all students, attending or otherwise, will be required to conform to any modifications in the schedule.

Dropping/Adding/Changing grade option

Please refer to the Registrar's [Drop/Add Policy](#) and the [Official Dates and Deadlines Calendar](#) for all questions related to dropping or adding or changing grade option for a 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.

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](#).

Exam 1: 60 points

Exam 2: 60 points

Exam 3: 60 points

(optional cumulative exam can replace one of these 3 exam grades)

Total possible points: 180 points

Grade scale

Grade	<u>Course total</u> Points %	Grade	Course Total Points %
A	93% and up	C	73%-76%
A-	90%-92	C-	70-72%

Grade	Course total Points %	Grade	Course Total Points %
B+	87%-89%	D+	67%-69%
B	83%-86%	D-	60%-62%
B-	80-82%	F	59% and below
C+	77-79%		

Tentative Reading Schedule

*This is subject to change

Dates Topic	Reading Schedule
Jan 22, 24, 26 Introduction Chap 1	Syllabus & Learning History of Learning and Behavior (Chapter 1: 17-43) Why Humans Learn*
Jan 29, 31, Feb 2 Simple Mechanisms of Learning	Basic Terms and Definitions of Learning (Chapter 2: 51-65; 70-81) Elicited Behaviors and Simple Mechanisms of Learning (Chap 2: 81-85; Chap 3: 94-98) Habituation & Sensitization (Chap 3: 98-107)
Feb 5, 7, 9 Classical Conditioning: Basic phenomenon	Classical Conditioning: Introduction (Chap 3: 107-125) Classical Conditioning Basic phenomenon (Chap 4: 133-142) Classical Conditioning: Extensions (Chap 4: 143-166)
Feb 12, 14 Classical Conditioning: Underlying Processes Chap 5	Underlying Processes in Classical conditioning (Chap 5: 169-179) Practical Applications of Classical conditioning (Chap 5: 179-203)
Feb 16	Test: Chapters 1-5
Feb 19	Presidents Day (No class)
Feb 21, 23 Operant Conditioning: Introduction	Operant conditioning: Historical Background (chap 6: 210-225) Operant Conditioning: (chap 6: 225-232)
Feb 26, 28, March 2 Schedules and Theories of Reinforcement	Positive Reinforcement: Further Distinctions (chap 6: 233-241) Schedules of Reinforcement (chap 7: 255-265) Schedules of Reinforcement cont. (Chap 7: 265-277)
March 5, 7, 9	Partial reinforcement extinction effects* Theories of Reinforcement (chap 7: 277-286)

Dates Topic	Reading Schedule
Schedules and Theories cont.	
March 12, 14, 16 Topics in Operant Conditioning	Operant Conditioning: Applications* Operant Conditioning: Critiques* Habits*
March 19	March 19: Test 2
March 21, 23 Extinction and Stimulus Control	Extinction (Chap 8: 293-306) Stimulus Control (Chap 8: 306-327)
March 26, 28, 30 Have fun!	Spring break (No class)
April 2, 4, 6 Escape, Avoidance and Punishment	Escape and Avoidance (chap 9: 335-346) Punishment* Critiques of Punishment*
April 9, 11, 13 Choice, Matching, and Self- Control	Choice & Matching (Chap 10: 373-383) Matching & Melioration (Chap 10: 383-388) Self-control (Chap 10: 388-409)
April 16, 18, 20 Observational Learning and Rule-Governed Behavior	Observational or social learning (Chap 11: 416-431) Social Learning and aggression (Chap 11: 431-435) Rule governed behavior (Chap 11: 435-447)
April 23, 25, 27 Biological Dispositions in Learning	Preparedness and conditioning (Chap 12: 453-467) Adjunctive behavior (Chap 12: 467-483) Intro to comparative cognition (Chap 13: 489-504)
April 30 & May 3 Comparative Cognition	Category learning and relational decisions (Chap 13: 504-516) Language acquisition (Chap 13: 516-530).
May 4	Test # 3
May 9	Final Exam (10:am-12pm)

*material covered will *not* be from the assigned textbook