Fall 9-1-2018

PSYX 270.01: Fundamental Psychology of Learning

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University of Montana, Missoula

PSYX 270 – Fundamentals of Learning
Syllabus Fall 2018

Course Information

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9:00 AM-9:50 AM
McGill Hall 210

Instructor information

Instructor: Alex Buscaglia
Office: Skaggs Building-053
Email: alexandra.buscaglia@umontana.edu
Office hours: TBA

Required textbooks

- **Introduction to Learning & Behavior** (5th 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 and 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 2 short answer questions (15 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:** <u>My lectures cover material that is not in the textbook. You will be held responsible for this material on the exams.</u>

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 <u>except</u> 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 13 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

<u>**General behavior**</u>

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 me 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 grades. 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
(Final Exam: *optional cumulative final exam can replace one of these 3 exam grades*)
Total possible points: 180 points

Grade scale

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

*Reading Schedule is subject to change

Dates Topic	Reading Schedule
August 27, 29, 31	Syllabus & Learning History of learning and behavior (Chap 1) Why Humans Learn*
September 3	**No Class: Labor Day**
September 5 & 7	Elicited behaviors, simple mechanisms of learning, habituation, and sensitization (Chap 2; Chap 3)
September 10, 12, 14	Introduction to Classical Conditioning (Chap 3) Basic phenomenon and extensions of classical conditioning (Chap 4)
September 17, 19, 21	Underlying processes and practical applications of classical conditioning (Chap 5)
September 24	**Test 1: Section 1, Chapters 1-5**
September 26 & 28	Intro to operant conditioning (Chap 6)
October 1, 3, 5	Further distinctions of positive reinforcement (Chap 6) Schedules of reinforcement (Chap 7)
October 8, 10, 12	Partial reinforcement extinction effects* Theories of Reinforcement (Chap 7)
October 15, 17, 19	Operant Conditioning: Applications* Operant Conditioning: Critiques* Habits*
October 22, 24, 26	Extinction and stimulus control (Chap 8)
October 29 & 31	Escape, avoidance (Chap 9), punishment*, and critiques

Dates Topic	Reading Schedule
	of punishment*
November 2	**Test 2, Section 2: Chapters 6-9**
November 5, 7, 9	Choice, matching, melioration, and self-control (Chap 10)
	No class: Veteran's Day
Nov 14 & 16	Observational/social learning, aggression, and rule governed behavior (Chap 11)
November 19	Preparedness, conditioning, and adjunctive behavior (Chap 12) Intro to comparative cognition (Chap 13)
November 21 & 23	**No class: Thanksgiving Break!**
November 26, 28, 30	Category learning, relational decisions, and language acquisition (Chap 13)
December 3	**Test 3, Section 3: Chapters 10-13**
December 5 & 7	Catch-up/ Review
December 12	**Optional Cumulative Final Exam (8 AM-10 AM)**

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