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PSYX 352.01: Comparative Psychology

Allen D. Szalda-Petree

University of Montana - Missoula, allen.szalda-petree@umontana.edu

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Syllabus: PSYX 352 – Comparative Psychology – Fall 2018

Instructor information

- Instructor: Allen Szalda-Petree
- Office: Skaggs Building 143
- Email: allen.szalda-petree@umontana.edu
- Phone: 406.243.2093
- Office hours: Monday & Friday from 11 – 12, Wednesday from 1 – 2, and by appointment

Required textbooks

- **Comparative Cognition – Olmstead & Kuhlmeier**

Course description and objectives

The purpose of this course is to provide a balanced view of the major modern perspectives on animal behavior (human primates included). There are four primary goals of this course: 1) Develop an understanding of the biological bases of animal behavior, 2) Develop an understanding of the ways in which the environment and evolution shape animal behavior, 3) Gain an appreciation for the similarities and differences in the ways in which animals communicate, learn, and solve the day to day problems of living, and 4) Expose students to the logic of carrying out empirical investigations both within and across species.

The major topics to be covered include the History of Animal Behavior studies (history of animal behavior studies, modern evolutionary theory and research methods, genetics), Biological Bases (neural and chemical control of behavior, sensory systems and timing, migration and navigation, emigration and habitat selection), Learning & Cognition (learning, cognition, foraging, predator defense), and Reproduction/Social Behavior (reproductive processes, attraction, mating systems, parental care, communication, social groupings).

Learning Outcomes

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

1. describe typical research methods used to study comparative animal behavior
2. describe animal behavior using basic evolutionary, ecological, developmental, physiological, and psychological mechanisms
3. apply a basic comparative framework to understand behavior broadly
4. place human primate behavior within a broader animal behavior context

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 1 short answer essay question (30 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

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.

Electronic devices (cell phones/tablets/laptops)

No laptops, tablets, phones, or other electronic screen devices are allowed out during lecture. If you need to use these devices as a reasonable modification or you have extenuating circumstances which require the use of an electronic screen device please see me.

The reasoning behind this policy is twofold. Recent research shows that

- laptop/screened device use is associated with a greater likelihood of multitasking. Multitasking during lecture has been shown, through both correlational and experimental methods, to result in poorer comprehension and subsequent exam performance.

The extant research on multitasking, more accurately called divided attention, is clear. Humans are poor multitaskers as evidenced by poorer performance on a task when multitasking compared to "singletasking" – equal performance multitasking is a myth.

- laptop/screened device use is distracting to other students within view of the screen and results in poorer comprehension and subsequent exam performance.

If you are an emergency professional (physician/nurse, counselor/therapist, EMT, etc) or you are expecting an EMERGENCY communication please set your wireless device to silent alarm mode and quietly exit the classroom to respond.

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 & 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" and CR/NCR will adhere strictly to university [Academic Policies and Procedures](#).

Grade scale

Grade	Percentage Correct
A	162 – 180
B	144 – 161
C	126 – 143
D	108 – 125
F	0 – 107

Tentative schedule

Dates	Topic
Sept 27, 29, & 31	Chapter 1: History of Comparative cognition
Sept 3	Labor Day Holiday (No class)
Sept 5 & 7	Chapter 2: Sensory systems
Sept 10, 12, & 14	Chapter 3: Memory
Sept 17, 19, & 21	Chapter 4: Associative processing
Sept 24, 26, & 28	Chapter 5: Orientation and Navigation
Oct 1	Exam 1 - Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Oct 3 & 5	Chapter 6: Timing and number
Oct 8, 10, & 12	Chapter 7: Decision making
Oct 15, 17, & 19	Chapter 8: Causality and tool use
Oct 22, 24, & 26	Chapter 9: Categorization and concept formation
Oct 29, 31, & Nov 2	Chapter 9 continued
Nov 5	Exam 2 – Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9
Nov 7 & 9	Chapter 10: Social competence
Nov 12	Veterans Day Holiday (No Class)
Nov 14, 16, 19	Chapter 11: Prosocial behavior
Nov 21 & 23	Thanksgiving Holiday (No class)
Nov 26, 28, 30, & Dec 3	Chapter 12: Communication Chapter 13: Learning from others
Dec 3	Exam 3 - Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13
Dec 5	Return Exam 3 and Course wrap-up
Dec 7	Review for final exam
8 - 10 am Monday, Dec 10	Final Exam - Chapters 1-13