

Conditioning & Learning

Psy 3250, Spring 2012

T-Th 7:30a-8:45a, Social and Behavioral Science 323

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Office: Hurst Center 102C

Office Hours: By Appointment

Required Texts:

1. Theories of Human Learning: What the Professor Said, 6th Edition; G. R. LeFrancois
2. Sniffy the Virtual Rat Pro, Version 3; T. Alloway, G. Wilson, J. Graham

COURSE OVERVIEW & LEARNING OUTCOMES

The purpose of the course is to gain an understanding of the basic principles associated with human conditioning and learning. In its most basic form, this course will guide you in an exploration of the history of behavioral psychology, including the rise and fall of the influence of the field on psychology in general.

The course has been organized into three parts: early conditioning and learning, neo-behaviorism, and current trends and directions of the field of conditioning and learning.

Learning outcomes for this course have been developed around the 4 general learning objectives of the Psychology Department at Weber State University, and are based on recommendations of the APA: Knowledge, Application, Values/Ethics, and Communication. Specifically, the outcomes for the class are as follows.

KNOWLEDGE – Students will understand psychology as a scientific discipline.

1.1 Conditioning and Learning Content Knowledge

Students will identify distinguishing characteristics of classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and more modern approaches to learning. This includes recognizing the historical context, pros and cons, and current applicability of each approach to learning.

APPLICATION – Students will apply psychological principles to explain social research and better understand their own behaviors.

2.1 Conditioning and Learning Application

Students will investigate principles of human learning with an eye toward comparing and contrasting different approaches; students will apply this knowledge through in depth exploration of a topic relevant to them.

VALUES/ETHICS – Students will display an attitude of skepticism and intellectual curiosity about psychological issues. Students will recognize the need for ethical guidelines and will practice ethical behaviors in regard to the field of psychology.

3.1 Conditioning and Learning Values

Students will compare and contrast past methodologies with current accepted practices, and will identify limitations of past and present research.

3.2 Conditioning and Learning Ethics

Students will summarize relevant information from a number of sources into a written document that is appropriately aligned with the proper referencing guidelines.

COMMUNICATION – Students will professionally communicate their understanding of terms, concepts, and theories via written and oral format.

4.1 Conditioning and Learning Written Communication – Logic

Students will explicitly outline logical flow of information from broad to most fine-grained; this logic will follow the form of “if A then B then C” and all evidence within the document will be related to this logic.

4.2 Conditioning and Learning Written Communication – Clarity

Students will write in a clear and concise manner; appropriate professional language will be used.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

APA Note: *Please note that all assignments are expected to be double-spaced, and follow correct APA format.*

Course Requirements:

Canvas: All assignments will be submitted through use of Canvas using the following link: <https://learn-wsu.uen.org>

In order to unlock the content of the course, each student will be required to take a Conditioning and Learning pretest. The pretest will not be used in the student’s calculation of grade, and will be used for diagnostic purposes only. Further instructions are provided on the Canvas website. Students will be asked to retake the test at the end of the semester, and will not be allowed to submit their final written project until the posttest has been submitted.

Weekly Points of Discussion (5pts each x 11 submissions)

Due Date: Thursday by 5pm each week

Each week students will be required to submit one question or comment about the readings for that week. This question or comment will be due the day before class in order to allow the instructor time to integrate them into the lecture each week. Questions and comments are meant to address areas of struggle with the readings, concerns about the content, or interesting questions or comments the topic being covered calls to mind. Students will be allowed to miss **one (1)** Point of Discussion (POD) during the course of the semester without penalty. Late PODs within the first week after the due date will result in a one (1) point penalty. After this time, no late work will be accepted.

Weekly Lab Assignment (10pts each x 10 submissions)

Due Date: Thursday by 5pm each week

Each student will be required to participate in weekly lab exercises designed to illustrate the concepts being covered in class. These labs will be accessed via the Sniffy the Virtual Rat CD and book. The basis behind doing these exercises is to see in action how operant

principles work. Sniffy the Virtual Rat moves and reacts like a “real” rat. Students must provide Sniffy with reinforcement for desired actions in order to create the desired relationships.

After completing the required Sniffy exercises each week, students will be required to answer the assigned questions regarding the lab as well as create a document with the graphs from the exercises in it. All graphics and answers to questions should be compiled into one document and turned in electronically by the due date.

A schedule of labs to complete is at the end of the syllabus. Students are allowed to miss **one (1)** lab during the semester without penalty. Labs should take an average of 15-30 minutes to complete, although a few will take much longer. More information on the approximate completion times will be provided throughout the semester. Please plan accordingly. Late labs within the first week after the due date will result in a two (2) point penalty. After this time, no late work will be accepted.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In order to understand what is going on with Sniffy, it is necessary to start from Chapter 1 in the book and move forward from there! If you do not read the first two chapters, you will not understand what is going on with Sniffy!

Lab Aides/Teaching Assistants – In order to facilitate using and comprehending the Sniffy lab section of the course, several lab aides/teaching assistants will be available throughout the semester. Extra help provided by the lab aides will include, but is not limited to, weekly lab hours facilitated by teaching assistants, help documentation, troubleshooting expertise, and help with interpretation of lab output. More information about specific activities will be provided throughout the semester. I encourage all students struggling with the labs to contact the teaching assistants.

NCUR Volunteer Experience (50 pts)

Volunteer Dates: March 29, 30, 31

Due Date: April 5

Weber State University is hosting the National Conference for Undergraduate Research over the weekend of March 29-31. This is a great opportunity to both showcase the great work being done by our undergraduate students, but also demonstrate our quality of character through positive interactions and hosting efforts for all the out of town guests that will be enjoying our campus. This is a monumental effort, and requires a great deal of work and help from all of us. As such, class will not be held on Thursday, March 29. Instead, all students will be expected to participate in NCUR in some way and then report on the experience. The following is a list of possible ways a student can participate in NCUR and the reporting requirements for each:

1. **Volunteer** – As stated above, a conference such as NCUR requires a great deal of help from the entire university community. The best way we can participate is through offering our services as volunteers. There are many volunteer opportunities available. Students choosing this method of participation will

- a. Sign up to volunteer for at least 2 hours at any NCUR event
 - b. Get a signature of completion from a WSU NCUR official
 - c. Write a 2 page report on the experience
2. **Oral Presentation or Poster Session Presenter** – Some of you may have submitted abstracts and been selected to present an oral presentation or poster at NCUR. This is a wonderful way to participate, and will be a great experience. To get credit for the class, those students presenting at NCUR will
 - a. Complete their oral presentation or poster
 - b. Write a 2 page report on the experience
3. **View Poster Session or Oral Presentation as Audience Member** – Those of you who do not wish to volunteer or who are not presenting at NCUR can receive credit for the course by being an audience participant to presentations and poster sessions. Students choosing this method to gain credit for the class will
 - a. Attend three (3) poster sessions or oral presentations
 - b. Critically review the material that is presented to you via use of the Oral Presentation Critique Sheet that is available on Canvas
 - c. Write a 2 page report summarizing what was presented to you for each poster session or oral presentation you attend

The best volunteer jobs will fill up quickly, so do not procrastinate or wait until the last minute to try to sign up. I recommend you do this in the first few weeks of the semester. All necessary information for NCUR can be found at the following link:

<http://www.weber.edu/OUR/conferences/NCUR.html>

Content Exams (75 pts each)

Approximate Exam Dates: Feb 2-6, March 8-19, April 16-19

There will be three (3) exams. These exams will cover the three main focuses of the course (early conditioning and learning, neo-behaviorists, current trends) and will be given approximately every five weeks. Exams will not be comprehensive, but some material from previous sections may show up on a later test depending on how much new information relates to old. If this is the case, the old material will be presented as a link to current material.

Tests will contain 20 multiple choice questions (2 pts each), 3 short-answer/matching questions (5 pts each), and 2 essay questions (10 pts each). Tests will be given using Chi Tester. No retakes of exams will be allowed except in the most extreme cases (i.e. death or serious illness to you or your immediate family, jury duty, etc).

Final Project (125 pts total)

Each student will be required to write a research paper related to a topic in conditioning and learning. Any topic within the textbook is a valid topic for investigation. This paper will consist of three (3) separate assignments that will be due at different times throughout the semester.

Final Project, Assignment 1: Outline and List of References with Quotes and Explanation (25 pts)

Due Date: Feb 17

The first assignment for the final project will consist of two parts: an outline and a list of references with quotes and explanations. These two parts may be combined into one paper or two, but both pieces must be present.

Part I—Outline:

Each student will be required to think through the organization of their final paper and present that organization in an outline format. The outline should be used as an organizational map for the completion of the final project. Students should think very carefully about this outline, as once it is turned in, it will be considered as a ‘writing contract’ by the instructor. More specifically, the organization of the final paper will be compared for consistency with the original outline.

Each outline should have 3 main headings, broken down further into subheadings. The 3 main headings should be *Introduction, Body, and Conclusion*.

Part II—List of References with Quotes and Explanations:

Each student will be required to turn in an extended reference list. This reference list will be much like an annotated bibliography, but with more detail. The reference list will consist of **at least 6 references, not including the text**. Three things will be expected:

1. Each reference should be written out using correct APA format.
2. Beneath each reference the student will be expected to explain in a paragraph why this reference is relevant to the proposal, and which section of the proposal the reference will be used in.
3. For each reference, the student is required to pull out 2 possible quotes for use in the proposal. These quotes should be typed up using proper APA format and proper referencing. In other words, the quote should be written as if it were a part of a research paper and not a bibliography.

Final Project Assignment 2: Problem Statement (25 pts)

Length: 1-1.5 pages

Due Date: March 9

The hardest two parts of any research paper are determining what the logic and flow will be and writing a competent introduction. This assignment focuses on the first page to page and a half of the final paper and represents the most critical part of the report. The flow for the entire report follows from this statement. Clear problem statements make the final report that much easier to write.

Each student will be required to use the material from the outline to write up a problem statement. This problem statement will act as a contract for the final report. The flow of the problem statement should mimic the flow of the research paper, and should follow a “if A then B then C” logic. This will be explained more in class. Problem statements will be critiqued on logic (13 pts) and clarity (12 pts) of topic introduced.

Final Project Assignment 3: Research Paper (75 pts)

Length: 7 pages

Due Date: April 13

The purpose of the research paper will be to write an in-depth investigation into one of the topics covered in the book. The paper should investigate the history of the topic, as well as the relevance and importance of the topic to cognitive psychology or to psychology and human behavior as a whole. The format followed for this paper should be as follows:

- Introduction/Problem Statement (1-2 pages)
- Body of the Report (5-7 pages)
- Discussion/Conclusion (1-2 pages)
- References (at least 6, not including the text)

The paper should use proper APA formatting, and should follow the organization of the outline and problem statement submitted early in the semester. The rubric for final grading is available on Canvas. Examples of each of the three parts of this assignment will be provided during the semester.

Points Breakdown

Weekly Points of Discussion	55 pts
Weekly Lab Exercises	100 pts
NCUR Volunteer Experience	50 pts
Three Exams (75 pts each)	225 pts
Final Project (125 pts total)	
Outline/Reference List	25 pts
Problem Statement	25 pts
Research Paper	75 pts
Total	555 points

Grading Scale:

A	93-100%	C	73-75%
A-	89-92%	C-	69-72%
B+	86-88%	D+	66-68%
B	83-85%	D	62-65%
B-	79-82%	F	Below 62%
C+	76-78%		

Extra Credit Opportunity (up to 10 pts):

Principles of conditioning and learning are present in a number of books, movies, television shows, and other social media that we are exposed to daily. Students can earn

extra credit for reading/watching approved media and writing a critical review that focuses on principles of learning that were present within the media. Points given will be based on completeness of review, clarity, and amount of thought that went in to review. An approved list of movies and books can be found on Canvas. Other media content exists that is not on the list. If a student would like to use something other than what is listed it is necessary to get the instructor's approval.

Contacting the Instructor:

If at any point any student has questions or problems during the course of the semester, please feel free to contact the instructor. Use of the Canvas email system as the initial contact point for the instructor is recommended. Please allow 24-48 hours for a response. If for some reason you don't receive a response from me through Canvas, my e-mail address is always an option, but please out of courtesy, use Canvas first. This assures that your email will not go unnoticed or get misplaced in the day-to-day shuffle of emails.

Changes in Course Assignments and Schedule:

The instructor reserves the right to adjust course readings, assignments, and test dates to best attain the objectives of the course. Any changes will be announced in class.

Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy:

Any academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If a student is caught engaged in academic dishonesty in this course, he or she risks failing the course and being subject to academic discipline including the imposition of university sanctions. For more information, please see the university policy on cheating, which can be found in the WSU Student Code, Section IV, Part D, Paragraph 2.

Students with Disabilities/Requests for Accommodations:

Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in Room 181 of the Student Services Center (or Room 221 at the Davis Campus). SSD can also arrange to provide course materials in alternative formats upon request. To contact SSD by phone: (801) 626-6413 – Ogden; or, (801) 395-3524 – Davis. <http://www.weber.edu/ssd>

Course Calendar:

	T		Th	
Week1	3-Jan	Ch1	5-Jan	Ch2; Watson (1913)
Week2	10-Jan	Ch2	12-Jan	Ch2
Week3	17-Jan	Watson & Raynor (1920)	19-Jan	Ch3
Week4	24-Jan	Ch3	26-Jan	Ch3
Week5	31-Jan	Skinner (1953); Exam 1 Review	2-Feb	Ch4
Week6	7-Feb	Ch4	9-Feb	Ch4; Skinner (1948)
Week7	14-Feb	Breland & Breland (1961); Ch5	16-Feb	Ch5

Week8	21-Feb	Seligman & Maier (1967)	23-Feb	Ch6
Week9	28-Feb	Ch6	1-Mar	Guthrie (1937); Tolman (1938)
Week10	6-Mar	Ch9	8-Mar	Ch9; Exam 2 Review
Week11	13-Mar	No Class – Spring Break	15-Mar	No Class – Spring Break
Week12	20-Mar	Ch9	22-Mar	Ch8
Week13	27-Mar	Ch7	29-Mar	No Class – NCUR, Volunteer
Week14	3-Apr	Ch10	5-Apr	Ch10
Week15	10-Apr	Ch11	12-Apr	Ch11; Exam 3 Review
FINAL EXAM			4/16-4/19	

Articles listed in readings section can be found on the Canvas course page.

Lab Schedule:

	Due Date	Lab Chapter & Exercises
Week1	5-Jan	Ch1, Ch2 - Intro to Program, read and take quiz
Week2	12-Jan	Ch3, Ex 1, 2, 3 for both Movement and Suppression Ratio*
Week3	19-Jan	Ch4, Ex 6, 7
Week4	26-Jan	Ch8, Ex 19
Week5	2-Feb	Ch10, Ex 22
Week6	9-Feb	Ch10, Ex 23, 24-read and take quiz
Week7	16-Feb	Ch10, Ex 25, 26, 27
Week8	23-Feb	Ch10-Ch11, Ex 28, 29, 30
Week9	1-Mar	Ch11-Ch12, Ex 31, 32, 34
Week10	8-Mar	Ch12, Ex 35, 36
Week11	15-Mar	NO LAB -- SPRING BREAK!
Week12	22-Mar	Ch12, Ex 37-38
Week13	29-Mar	NO LAB -- NCUR!
Week14	5-Apr	Ch14, Ex 45, 46, 47, 48 -- choose and complete ONE
Week15	12-Apr	NO LAB -- End of Semester

*Ex 1-3 will be the only instance in which both Movement and Suppression Ratios are to be used. From this point on, all exercises will use the Movement Ratio.