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PSYX 270.02: Fundamentals of the Psychology of Learning

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Psyx 270: Fundamental Psychology of Learning

Instructor Information

Instructor: Zachary Ahlstrom

Office: Skaggs 368

Email: zachary.ahlstrom@umontana.edu

Office Hours: Monday 12:00 – 1:00pm; Wednesday & Thursday 10:00 – 1:00pm; and by appointment

Required Textbook

Introduction to Learning & Behavior (4th Edition) – Powell, Honey, & Symbaluk

Course Objectives

1. Understand history of psychology leading to the study of learning
2. Learn how research methods apply to the study of learning
3. Gain a theoretical and practical understanding of Classical Conditioning
4. Gain a theoretical and practical understanding of Operant Conditioning
5. Learn about the choice-making process and its applications
6. Obtain some exposure to animal cognition and comparative psychology

Exams

There will be a total of 4 exams, including a final. The final is comprehensive. However, only the top 3 scores will count towards your final grade. Each exam is worth the same total points.

Exam Format:

20 multiple-choice questions (1 pt. each)

2 short answer questions (5 pts. each) – Generally requiring 1-3 sentences to answer

1 short essay question (20 pts.) – More comprehensive answer required

Total of 50 points for each exam

Both lecture and book material will be covered on the exams. Multiple-choice questions will be drawn from the textbook and the short essay will be drawn from lecture. The short answer questions may be drawn from either lecture or book. You are expected to read the textbook. I will not cover everything in every chapter, but all material in the assigned chapters is fair game for the exams.

Students may see me during my office hours for reevaluation of exam items until next exam. After that, scores and exam items will not be changed.

Make-up exams will only be given in very unusual circumstances. If there is a very unusual circumstance that prevented you from taking an exam on its assigned date, come to my office and I will review your request for a make-up.

Quizzes

There will be a quiz on Moodle every week unless indicated otherwise on the tentative schedule:

Each quiz will be 10 questions (0.5 pts. each)

Each quiz will open on Monday at Midnight

Each quiz close on the following Sunday at 11:00pm
Allowed 15 minutes to complete each quiz
Each quiz corresponds to a chapter in your textbook
Total of 11 quizzes throughout the semester, only top 10 scores will count towards final grade
Each quiz worth 5 points, for a total of 50 points of quiz score on final grade

See the tentative schedule for the quiz dates and chapters covered. All material from the chapter(s) is fair game for the quiz. Material covered in lecture that is not in the book will not be on the quizzes.

Quiz questions will be drawn randomly from a large pool, so your quiz will probably not have the same questions as your friend's quiz.

Like make-up exams, make-up quizzes will only be considered in very unusual circumstances. If you are uncertain about possible technical difficulties, I advise taking the quiz in the school library.

Grading

Exams: 150 points (top 3 scores, 50 points each)

Quizzes: 50 points (top 10 scores, 5 points each)

Total: 200 total points

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	Total points
A	180+
B	160-179
C	140-159
D	120-139
F	Below 120

Extra Credit

There will be opportunities to earn up to 14 points extra credit towards your final grade.

The three midterm exams will include a 3-point extra credit question. This extra credit will not be lost if you drop the exam. You earn it, you keep it. (9 total points possible)

If you take all eleven quizzes the lowest quiz score will count as extra credit on your final grade. (5 points possible)

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)

Please feel free to use your electronic devices in class for activities directly related to this class – e.g., taking notes, viewing textbook/supplements, etc. If you do use an electronic device, I would like to ask you to sit near the back of the classroom so your screen does not distract other students or block their view.

For what should be blatantly obvious reasons, the use of electronic devices for purposes other than those directly related to this class is prohibited. This specifically includes such activities as 1) placing or receiving phone calls, 2) sending or receiving text messages, and 3) internet searching, checking email, game playing, watching movies, homework for other classes, etc.

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 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.

Tentative Course Schedule

Dates	Material	Quiz due by: (Sunday, 11:00 pm)
Jan. 27 & 29	Syllabus Chapter 1: Introduction, History	No Quiz
Feb. 3 & 5	Chapter 2: Research Methods Chapter 3: Elicited Behaviors and Classical Conditioning	Quiz 1 (Ch. 1 & 2)
Feb. 10 & 12	Chapter 4: Classical Conditioning – basic phenomena	Quiz 2 (Ch. 3 & 4)
Feb. 17 & 19	Chapter 5: Classical Conditioning – underlying processes	Quiz 3 (Ch. 5)
Feb. 24	Exam 1: Chapters 1-5	Quiz 4 (Ch. 6)
Feb. 26	Chapter 6: Operant Conditioning	
Mar. 3 & 5	Chapter 7: Schedules and Theories of Reinforcement	Quiz 5 (Ch. 7)
Mar. 10 & 12	Chapter 8: Extinction and Stimulus Control	Quiz 6 (Ch. 8)
Mar. 17 & 19	Chapter 9: Escape, Avoidance, and Punishment	Quiz 7 (Ch. 9)
Mar. 24	Finish Section 2	No Quiz
Mar. 26	Exam 2: Chapters 6-9	
Mar. 31 & Apr. 2	Spring Break!	No Quiz
Apr. 7 & 9	Chapter 10: Choice, Matching, and Self Control	Quiz 8 (Ch. 10)
Apr. 14 & 16	Chapter 11: Observational Learning and Rule-Governed Behavior	Quiz 9 (Ch. 11)
Apr. 21 & 23	Chapter 12: Dispositions in Learning	Quiz 10 (Ch. 12)
Apr. 28 & 30	Chapter 13: Comparative Cognition	Quiz 11 (Ch. 13)
May 5	Finish Section 3	No Quiz
May 7	Exam 3: Chapters 10-13	
May 12 (Tuesday)	Final Exam: Chapters 1-13 1:10-3:10pm	