
Western Kentucky University
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Psychology
Course Syllabus (Spring 2017)

Course: Psychology of Learning (PSY 331 - 001)

Location: Gary Ransdell Hall (GRH) 3005

Meeting Time: TR 9:35am – 10:55a.m.

Instructor: Qin Zhao, Ph. D.

Office: Gary Ransdell Hall 3015

Phone: 745-5023

E-mail: qin.zhao@wku.edu

Office Hours: MTWR 2:00-4:00p.m.; other times by appointment

Blackboard: <https://ecourses.wku.edu>

This is a web-enhanced course. Some supplementary readings and assignments will be posted to Blackboard. Check Blackboard and your email on a daily basis.

Required Text

Chance, P. (2014; 7th edition). *Learning & behavior: Active learning edition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Course Description

Prerequisite: *PSY 210 and PSY 211 with a grade of "C" or better, and junior standing or permission of instructor*

PSY 331 presents an overview of animal and human learning from the perspectives of classical and operant conditioning and social-cognitive learning. Theoretical issues, research, and applications are examined.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe the measures of learning and the research designs that have been and are currently being used in the study of learning and behavior;
2. Describe classical conditioning and the variables that affect acquisition and extinction of conditioned responses;
3. Describe operant conditioning and the variables that affect reinforcement and punishment;
4. Discuss major applications of classical and operant conditioning;
5. Distinguish between discrimination and generalization and describe the major theories of stimulus control;
6. Describe observational learning, the variables that affect observational learning, and the major applications;
7. Understand how learning theories and/or empirical findings have been applied to real-world problems.

Course Requirements and Assignments:

1. In-Class Activities (150 pts)

There will be frequent in-class work pertaining to course content, for example, short quizzes and application exercises. These activities are designed to facilitate active information processing and critical thinking of the concepts discussed in the course. Detailed instructions for these activities will be given in class.

You must be in class to participate in these activities. Make-up exercises are given only under extenuating circumstances with appropriate documentation. Thus, it is critical that you attend class.

2. Exams (260 pts)

There will be three in-class exams. The final exam is cumulative and will be given at the time scheduled by the University. The first and second exams will each be worth 80 points while the final exam will be worth 100 points. Each exam will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions drawn from the textbook, lectures, and class activities. The questions will target your understanding as well as application of important theories and concepts discussed in this course.

No exams will be given early. A make-up exam will be given only if:

1. The student has a legitimate excuse for missing the exam, and
2. The student calls or e-mails me in advance of the exam that he/she must miss the exam. My voicemail or e-mail will record any messages if I am out of the office when you contact me.

3. Article Responses (50 pts)

You will also read journal articles relevant to the course and respond to critical thinking questions that assess your understanding of the articles.

Your completed assignments (typed, in MS Word documents) must be posted on Blackboard via the assignment links by the due dates indicated in the course schedule. It is not recommended to wait until the last minute to submit an assignment. Late assignments without documentation of a valid excuse will not be accepted. Note: Keep a saved copy of ALL assignments. Assignments will not be counted as late if you have dated documentation of saved files.

4. Group Presentation (40 pts)

You will form small groups for this assignment. Each group must find one empirical journal article that describes the applications of behavioral learning principles to real life issues and problems. (In an empirical paper, authors specifically describe one or a few related studies that they conducted to test a particular hypothesis. An empirical paper has Method, Results, and Discussion sections.) Your group will prepare a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the information for the class. Your articles must be published in academic journals

no earlier than 2007. The articles you use must be approved before the PowerPoint is made.

Your presentation should include: (a) Article references, listed in APA format; (b) An introduction of the background literature and a statement of the purposes of the articles; (c) A description of the methodology used (including participants, setting, experimental design, and procedures); and (d) A description of the results of the studies.

Group members must collaborate with each other and discuss how to divide workload fairly. Every group must submit a work distribution report on the day of presentation (1 report per group). Group performance will be evaluated based on the grading rubric in the syllabus. Everyone will fill out a peer evaluation form for the other group members' contributions to the project. Your individual grade for each presentation will be determined by multiplying your group grade by your peer evaluation grade. For instance, a student who gets full credit on the peer evaluation will have the group grade multiplied by 100%. A student who only gets half credit on peer evaluation will get the group grade multiplied by 50%.

Grading Scale:

A = 450 to 500 points

B = 400 to 449 points

C = 350 to 399 points

D = 300 to 349 points

F = 0 to 299 points

Additional Course Requirement for Graduate students and the Undergraduates Enrolled in an Honors Section:

Research a topic of your interest that is relevant to animal or human learning. From your research, you must collect a list of at least four empirical journal articles that are most relevant to your topic and produce a mini literature review. The articles you use must be published in academic journals no earlier than 2007.

The review must be written in APA style. Please refer to the APA Publication Manual for information about citing sources and the proper formats for the different types of sources on your reference list. See Blackboard for a video on writing literature review as well as two samples. In terms of length, the mini-review is expected to be approximately 10 double-spaced pages long in 12-point font, not including the cover page, abstract, and reference list. Files must be MS Word documents. The grading rubric for the review is included in the syllabus.

Course Policies

1. Class Etiquette

Professional conduct is expected of all students. You are expected to participate respectfully during discussions and to listen attentively during lectures and when fellow students are contributing to class discussion.

Arriving late or leaving early is disruptive to others. Arriving late for multiple times (more than 3) will result in a meeting with me to discuss the matter. If you must leave early, please let me know at the beginning of the class period.

Cell phones should be turned off and put away during class, except in cases of emergency where prior approval from me has been obtained.

2. Office Hours

You are encouraged to drop by during my office hours, if you have a question about the course. If the posted office hours do not work for you, feel free to email me to make an appointment. Due to the large volume of emails I receive in a day, please enter as your subject- PSY 331, your name, and nature of inquiry. This way, I will be able to catch it as “priority email” and to respond promptly.

Please note that student inquiry regarding grades must be addressed through a requested meeting with the instructor. No discussion of grades will take place via e-mail or during class break times. Inquiries regarding grades, progress in class, and so on should be discussed with the instructor in a timely manner. There will be no conferences to deal with these issues during finals week.

3. Academic Honesty

All students are expected to read and abide by the academic honesty guidelines stated in the WKU student handbook (www.wku.edu/StuAffairs/StuLife/handbook/toc.htm).

Violations of this code of conduct include but are not limited to cheating (collaborating or consulting with another person in an academic activity without authorization) and plagiarism (representing as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another). Plagiarism and cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Either behavior will result in a grade of ‘F’ for the course. Student work may be checked using plagiarism detection software.

4. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, 1074. The phone number is 270.745.5004 [270.745.5121 V/TDD] or email at sarc@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the

professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation (LOA) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

The Learning Center (TLC)

Should you require academic assistance with your WKU courses, The Learning Center (located in the Downing Student Union, 2141) provides free supplemental education programs for all currently enrolled WKU students. The Learning Center at Downing Student Union offers certified, one-on-one tutoring in over 200 subjects and eight academic skill areas by appointment or walk in. Online tutoring is offered to distance learners. TLC is also a quiet study area (with side rooms designated for peer-to-peer tutoring) and a computer lab to complete academic coursework. Please call TLC in the Downing Student Union at (270) 745-5065 for more information or to schedule a tutoring appointment.

www.wku.edu/tlc

Grading Rubric: In-Class Presentation

_____ Content (35 pts)

- (a) Article reference, listed in APA format (5 pts);
- (b) An introduction of the background literature and a statement of the purposes of the article (10 pts);
- (c) A description of the methodology used (including participants, setting, experimental design, and procedures) (10 pts);
- (d) A description of the results of the study (10 pts).

_____ Presentation Style (5 pts)

Speaks clearly; uses eye contact and appropriate body language to interact with audience

_____ Total Points (out of 40 possible points)

Grading Rubric: Literature Review

(for Graduate students and the Undergraduates Enrolled in an Honors Section)

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Ideas are well integrated & synthesized (40 pts.) | _____ |
| 2. The reviewed literature is critically analyzed (30 pts.) | _____ |
| 3. Paragraphs are organized effectively with transitions, topic sentences, paragraph unity (10 pts.) | _____ |
| 4. Paper is not rendered difficult to read by problematic grammar, punctuation, etc. (10 pts.) | _____ |
| 5. APA style is followed (in-text citations and a reference list) (10 pts.) | _____ |

Total Points (out of 100 possible points) _____

Course Outline
(Tentative and subject to change)

Week 1: 1/24 & 1/26

Assigned reading:

- Review **Syllabus**
- Chapter 2: **Introductions to Psych of Learning**

Week 2: 1/31 & 2/2

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 3: **Pavlovian Conditioning**

Week 3: 2/7 & 2/9

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 4: **Pavlovian Applications**
- Article: *Affective Conditioning and Prejudice*

Article response assignment due - 2/17*Week 4: 2/14 & 2/16**

Assigned Reading:

- Chapter 5: **Operant Learning: Reinforcement**

Week 5: 2/21 & 2/23

- Exam I review (Chapters 2~5) on 2/21
 - **Exam I on 2/23**
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Week 6: 2/28 & 3/2

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 6: **Reinforcement – Beyond Habit**

Week 7: 3/7 & 3/9

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 7: **Schedules of Reinforcement**

Week 8: 3/14 & 3/16

*Spring Break***Week 9: 3/21 & 3/23**

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 8: **Operant Learning: Punishment**
- Article: *Operant Learning and Aggression*

Article response assignment due - 3/31*Week 10: 3/28 & 3/30**

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 9: **Operant Applications**

Week 11: 4/4 & 4/6

- Exam II review (Chapters 6-9) on 4/4
 - **Exam II on 4/6**
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Week 12: 4/11 & 4/13

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 10: **Observational Learning**

Week 13: 4/18 & 4/20

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 11: **Generalization, discrimination, and stimulus control**

Week 14: 4/25 & 4/27

- Assigned Reading: Chapter 12: **Forgetting**
- Final Exam review (cumulative)

Week 15: 5/2 & 5/4

- **Group presentations**

Week 16 (FINALS WEEK):

***Final Exam (cumulative) on 5/8 @1:00pm to 3:00pm**
