

Psy 326K: PRINCIPLES OF CONDITIONING AND LEARNING

SYLLABUS

Spring, 2011

T Th 9:30 AM to 11:00 PM

NOA 1.126

Unique #43705

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I. Rationale

Conditioning and learning has been a core topic in psychology since the turn of the twentieth century. Therefore, familiarity with this area is essential to a well-rounded education in psychology.

The course will enable students to gain mastery of the basic concepts, data, and theory of conditioning and learning. The course deals with basic forms of learning that are involved in learning emotional and motor movements and relationships between events. The course will emphasize implicit and procedural learning rather than episodic or declarative learning. The learning principles to be discussed include habituation, Pavlovian and instrumental conditioning, discrimination learning, memory mechanisms, and categorization.

The field of conditioning and learning has a strong behavioral and experimental emphasis. It covers both theory and experimental methodology, with a critical eye to evidence that justifies particular theoretical interpretations. The basic principles of learning will be illustrated by examples from common experience and from applications in educational and clinical situations. However, many of the principles were initially identified in research with laboratory animals.

II. Aims

The course has three major aims. The first is for students to gain mastery of the basic concepts, technical vocabulary, and research methods of the field of conditioning and learning. The second aim is for students to become adept in recognizing the relevance of conditioning and learning in their personal lives and in other areas of psychology. The third aim is to encourage students to become more objective in how they view behavior and become more critical in how they think about explanations of behavior.

III. Format and Procedures

The course will consist of a series of lecture/discussions. Students are encouraged to ask questions and offer comments. The information presented in class will follow the textbook in basic structure, but many of the details and examples will be elaborations on the assigned readings. Test questions will be based on both the assigned readings and the material covered in class. Five short tests will be administered during the course of the semester. In addition, students will be required to submit 8 short (1 page) reaction papers. The topics for these will be announced in class.

Class Information: The Blackboard system will be used to post all class information, assignments, grades, etc. Access requires a UT EID.

Prerequisites:

- (a) PSY 301 with a C or better
- (b) PSY 418 (or an equivalent listed in the course schedule) with a C or better
- (c) Upper-Division standing (60 hours completed)

The Psychology Department will drop all students who do not meet these prerequisites.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

If you plan to miss an assignment or test for religious reasons, please notify the Professor at the start of the semester. After-the-fact accommodations for religious reasons will not be entertained.

Late Adds: Dean's offices typically will not allow adds past Feb 14th, when official roll is taken.

Attendance and Conduct in the Classroom

Class time is precious. To make our time together as valuable as possible, we all have to work hard at it. The following are basic principles:

- a) It is in your best interest to attend all scheduled classes. The topics for the reactions papers will only be announced in class. In addition, you will be tested both on material covered in class and on material in the reading assignments. Students who do not attend class regularly cannot expect to get better than a C in the course, and may do worse.
- b) Every student has the *right* to learn in class as well as the *responsibility* not to deprive others of their right to learn.
- c) You and only you are responsible for your education. The instructor cannot make you learn. Therefore, you must conduct yourself in class so as to maximize your learning.
- d) The use of cell phones will not be allowed in class.
- e) The use of computers in class will be limited to taking notes and looking at the slides for the day's lecture. Do not engage in textmessaging, email, twitter,

- facebook, or browse the web. Students found to use electronic media unrelated to the class will be asked to leave the class.
- f) Please arrive to class on time. Late arrivals and early departures are very disruptive and violate the first basic principle listed above.
 - g) If you have trouble hearing the lecture or media presentation because of electronic or other distractions around you, quietly ask those responsible for the distraction to stop. If the distraction continues, please let me know.

Academic Integrity

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including a possible F in the course and/or dismissal from The University. Such dishonesty harms the individual, other students, and the integrity of The University as a whole. Therefore, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. (See University Honor Code, <http://www.utexas.edu/about-ut/mission-core-purpose-honor-code>). Each student is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in class with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 18, 20, 25, 27*	Ch 1: History, and Basic Concepts
Feb 1, 3*	Ch 2: Elicited Behavior, Habituation, and Sensitization
Feb 8	Ch 2 (continued) and Test 1
Feb 10, 15, 17*	Ch 3: Pavlovian Conditioning: Foundations
Feb 22, 24*	Ch 4: Pavlovian Conditioning: Mechanisms
March 1	Ch 4 (continued) and Test 2

March 3, 8, 10*	Ch 5: Instrumental Conditioning: Foundations
March 22, 24*	Ch 6: Schedules of Reinforcement and Choice Behavior
March 29	Ch 6 (continued) and Test 3
March 31, April 5*, 7	Ch 7: Instrumental Conditioning: Motivational Mechanisms
April 12*, 14, 19	Ch 9: Extinction
April 21	Ch 9 (continued) and Test 4
April 26, 28*	Ch 11: Memory Mechanisms
May 3	Ch 12: Special Topics in Comparative Cognition
May 5	Ch 12 (continued) and Test 5
May 14 (Sat), 7-10 pm	Comprehensive Final Exam

*Dates for *reaction papers*. The topic for reaction papers will be announced only during the preceding class period. Do not expect to get the topic by emailing either the instructor or the TA. Only paper copies of reaction papers will be accepted. Work handed in late will not be credited. Email submissions will not be accepted.

Note: The course is cumulative. Information presented in later units depends on what was covered earlier. Therefore, each test will cover not only the material presented since the last test but may require knowledge from earlier units. It's not a good idea to quit coming to class for a couple of weeks and then try to catch up.

Grading: There will be five short tests (30 questions each) before the Final Exam. However, only four of the interim test grades will count towards the final grade. Therefore, you can either skip taking a test or have one of the five test grades dropped. The five interim test grades will constitute 60% of your final grade. The comprehensive Final Exam will count for 25% of your final grade, and the remaining 15% will be based on the reaction papers. Of the nine reaction papers, you only need to submit 5. Each one will be graded on a 3 point scale. Final letter grades in the course will be assigned by the usual criteria: A= 90-100, B= 80-89, C= 70-79, D=60-69, F= below 60.

Make-up policy: Since students may drop the lowest grade received on one of the five tests, and only need to hand in 5 of the 9 reaction papers, no make-up tests or assignments will be given.

Extra Credit: Students who wish to do well in the course should concentrate on mastering the required work. If you have not mastered the required work, it does not make sense to take on extra assignments. Therefore, there will be no opportunities to earn extra credit. If you wish to submit all 9 of the reaction papers, the best 5 will count towards your final grade.

Grades during the course of the semester will be posted in Blackboard. Final grades will be available to students on their protected UTDirect pages. University policy prohibits giving out grades over the phone or by email.

Other University Notices and Policies

Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Q drop Policy

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231:

“Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student shows good cause for dropping more than that number.”

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.