

Psychology of Learning

PSYC 304; Section 001

Fall, 1998

SPO

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Office Hours: M/W/F 12:30 – 1:10pm

or by appointment/e-mail

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Text: Barker, L.M. (1997). Learning and Behavior. (2nd edition) London: Prentice Hall.

Additional reading materials will be distributed throughout the semester during class.

Course Objectives: This course is designed to be an overview of learning principles that guide animal behavior, particularly that of humans. Students will be expected to think critically about recent research findings and theoretical perspectives in the area. Emphasis will be placed on the application of learning principles to everyday life.

Grading: Final grades will be based on a 400 point scale: 300 points will be available in the lecture section of the course, while the remaining 100 points will be earned through participation in lab activities. You must be enrolled in the laboratory section to receive credit for the class.

Lecture section grading:

- 1) There will be two exams and a final exam. The exams will include material covered in class as well as material from the book and/or assigned readings. The format will be true/false, multiple-choice, and short answer. Each exam will be worth 80 points. The final exam will be cumulative, but heavy emphasis will be placed on the most current material.
- 2) Students will be required to write two 30 point thought papers. The papers should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced and typed. These papers will require an understanding and application of learning principles. Paper topics and grading guidelines will be discussed in detail in class.

Note: NO makeup exams will be provided without a legitimate, documented excuse (e.g., grave illness requiring medical attention, court date). Students who know that they will miss an exam must notify the instructor at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled exam. Make-up exams will consist of essay questions. All papers are due at the start of the class on the scheduled date. Late work will be penalized three points for each day beyond the deadline. A paper submitted after the start of class on the assigned day will be considered one day late.

Expectations: Class participation and discussion are essential for a complete educational experience. Students should be prepared to discuss topical issues related to textbook and readings. Oral defense of ideas is as important a skill as written presentation.

Extra Credit: Extra credit opportunities will be given throughout the semester during class lecture.

Honor System: The Honor Code of George Mason University will be strictly enforced in this course. It is a student's responsibility to be familiar with the Honor Code and to abide by it at all times. Any suspected violation will be reported to the Honor Court.

If any students have special needs, please see instructor.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Chapter(s)</u>
8/31 – 9/4	Introduction & Historical Issues	1, 2
9/7	<i>No class – Labor Day</i>	
9/9	Research Methods	1, 2
9/11 – 9/14	Reflexes & Simple Associations	3
9/16	Paper #1 Due	
9/16 – 9/21	Classical Conditioning	3
9/23 – 9/30	Complexities of Classical Conditioning	4
10/2	EXAM 1 (Chaps. 1 – 4 and additional readings)	
10/5 – 10/9	Introduction to Instrumental Conditioning	5
10/12	<i>No class – Columbus Day</i>	
10/14 – 10/23	Reinforcement & Punishment	6
10/26	Observational/ Social Learning	6
10/28 – 11/2	Physiology and Learning: The Role of the Nervous System	7
10/30	Paper #2 Due	
11/4 – 11/9	Developmental & Contextual Issues: Constraints on Learning	7, 8
11/13	EXAM 2 (Chaps. 5 – 8 and additional readings)	
11/16 – 11/18	Choice Behaviors & Self Control	8
11/20 – 11/23	Complex Learning Principles	8, 9
11/25 – 12/4	Conceptual Learning & Theory	9
11/27	<i>No class - Thanksgiving</i>	
12/7 – 12/11	Language, Intelligence & Culture: The Uniqueness of the Human Experience	10

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, December 16, 10:30 am – 1:15 pm