

**Spring 2012 • Hofstra University • Department of Psychology
Principles of Learning and Behavior (Psy 110) – Dr. Oskar Pineño**

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Time and place of lectures: **Psy 110-01:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 12:45 pm to 2:10 pm, in Breslin Hall 112.
Office: Hauser Hall (Department of Psychology), Room 116.
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3 pm to 6 pm, or by appointment.

I will be available to speak with individual students immediately after class, during the office hours, and by appointment (scheduled by e-mail).

Course description

Psy 110: “Basic concepts and principles of learning and conditioning with animals and human beings.”

In this course we will discuss the empirical and theoretical basis of *Psychology of Learning*, the scientific discipline in charge of the study of the psychological processes underlying behavioral change as a result of prior experience.

Although still a young science, the study of learning and behavior has been constantly revising its theoretical foundations in order to embrace other currents of thought in psychology, such as evolutionary psychology and cognitive psychology. Accordingly, in this course we will adopt an integrative approach: We will discuss original, purely behavioral theories of learning, as well as theories born after the cognitive revolution of the 1950s and 1960s, while always keeping in mind evolutionary aspects of learning (e.g., its adaptive purpose and evolutionary constraints).

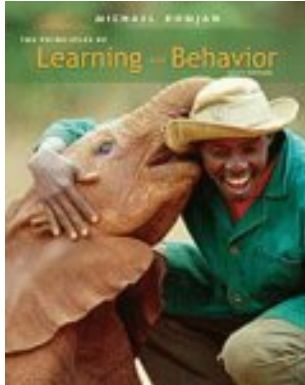
This course is organized as follows:

1. Elicited behavior and its change with experience (habituation vs. sensitization).
2. Pavlovian or classical conditioning.
3. Operant or instrumental conditioning.

At the end of this course you should be able to:

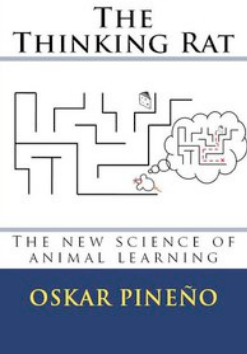
1. Understand the experimental method as applied to research in learning and behavior.
2. Describe the most relevant findings in the literature of learning and behavior.
3. Understand and contrast different theories of learning and behavior.
4. Think critically about the topics discussed in the course.

Required readings



Domjan, M. (2010). *The principles of learning and behavior*. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.

ISBN-10: 0495601993
ISBN-13: 978-0495601999



Pineño, O. (2010). *The thinking rat: The new science of animal learning*. Charleston, SC: CreateSpace.

ISBN-10: 1450580424
ISBN-13: 978-1450580427
ASIN (Kindle Edition): B003VD1F34

Grade calculation

Your grade is calculated as follows:

A midterm exam: 30%
A final exam: 30%
A paper: 40%

You can see the above percentages of credit as *points*. During the course, you will accrue points as a function of your performance in the exams and the quality of your paper. At the end of the course, your points will be converted into your final grade, according to the following table:

Grade	Points (%)
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	85-89
B	80-84
B-	75-79
C+	70-74
C	65-69
C-	60-64
D+	55-59
D	50-54
F	0-49

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Exams

The midterm and final exams will consist of 2 essay questions each. Each exam will be worth up to 30% of the final grade. A few days before the exam, a list of 10-12 candidate questions will be given to the students. At the exam, the student will be given 3 of those questions. However, only 2 of these 3 questions will have to be answered: the student will choose which 2 questions to answer, leaving 1 question unanswered without penalty.

Assignment

A paper (essay) will be required in this course and it will be worth up to 40% of the final grade. The essay must be 2000 words in length (approx.). Essays of less than 1800 words will be automatically deducted 20 points (out of 40). The essay topic will be distributed in advance. In an effort to reduce our paper waste, the assignments will be accepted *only* in an electronic format: drafts will be provided by email and the final essays will be uploaded to Turnitin (on Blackboard). The submission deadline is indicated in the assignment schedule. No late essays will be accepted (unless excused by official documentation, e.g., your doctor).

Academic honesty

Plagiarism is a serious ethical and professional infraction. Hofstra's policy on academic honesty reads: "The academic community assumes that work of any kind [...] is done, entirely, and without assistance, by and only for the individual(s) whose name(s) it bears." Please refer to the "Procedure for Handling Violations of Academic Honesty by Undergraduate Students at Hofstra University" to be found at http://www.hofstra.edu/PDF/Senate_FPS_11.pdf, for details about what constitutes plagiarism, and Hofstra's procedures for handling violations.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional presentation of other people's work as your own. Papers containing material from any sources (including but not limited to textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias, newspapers, televised programs, class handouts and blackboard postings), without explicitly referencing those sources will receive a grade of zero. This applies to direct quotations and paraphrases equally. If your paper is found to be plagiarized, it will receive a grade of zero, and, in compliance with official Hofstra policy, notice of this will be sent to the Dean's office.

Sources

When writing papers for this class, you are required to include a last section containing a list of all sources that you have either referred to in your paper, or consulted in researching your paper. Papers are not considered submitted until the list of sources is included. If your paper is found to contain material from sources that are not listed on this document, it is plagiarized, and will be punished as described above.

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Special needs

If you have any concerns regarding a physical, psychological and/or learning disability that may have an impact upon your performance in this course, appropriate accommodations can be made on an individualized, as-needed basis after the needs, circumstances and documentation have been evaluated by the appropriate office on campus.

The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities is located in 212 Memorial Hall. Telephone: 516-463-7074. Please see the Hofstra Guide to Pride, or see their site: <http://www.hofstra.edu/StudentAffairs/stdtis/index.html>. All disability-related information will be kept confidential.

A few rules

The following “common-sense” rules will be effective in this course:

- You are expected to *arrive on time*.
- Any kind of voluntary *disruptive behavior* will negatively affect your grade. Examples of disruptive behavior include, but are not limited to:
 - “Parallel chatting”, or talking to somebody while the professor and/or another student is speaking, or when you are supposed to remain quiet.
 - Talking/texting on the cell phone. Please, turn your cell phone off before entering the class. Receiving a phone call or texting while you are in the class could lower your grade.
- No kind of *electronic device* (e.g., cell phones, beepers, MP3 players, PDAs...) will be allowed during the exams. Failing to follow this rule will result in your losing credit for the corresponding exam.
- Your interaction with the professor and your peers should *always* be *respectful*. Offenses and insults of any kind, either overt or insinuated, have no room in our course. Failure to follow this rule will lower your grade.

Departmental goals and objectives for Psy 110

- Learning goal: Base of knowledge
 - Students will learn and retain a broad base of knowledge in the various domains of Psychology in order to prepare for graduate schools in various disciplines of psychology or education and for a wide variety of postgraduate career opportunities, including but not limited to jobs in education, industry, human health services, and professional schools.
- Learning objective
 - Students will demonstrate through papers, reports, examinations, theses and other written means, systematic knowledge in foundational areas such as History of Psychology, Biological Bases of Behavior, Human Development, Social Psychology, Learning, and Cognitive Psychology.

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Tentative assignment schedule:

Date	Day	Topics to be discussed	Required readings
Jan. 26	R	<i>Presentation of the course</i>	<i>No reading required</i>
Jan. 31	T	Documentary: <i>Nature: Animal minds</i>	<i>No reading required</i>
Feb. 02	R	Introduction	Domjan: Chapter 01
Feb. 07	T	Elicited behavior, habituation, and sensitization	Domjan: Chapter 02
Feb. 09	R	Elicited behavior, habituation, and sensitization	Domjan: Chapter 02
Feb. 14	T	Classical conditioning: Foundations	Domjan: Chapter 03
Feb. 16	R	Classical conditioning: Foundations	Domjan: Chapter 03
Feb. 23	R	Classical conditioning: Mechanisms	Domjan: Chapter 04
Feb. 28	T	Classical conditioning: Mechanisms	Domjan: Chapter 04
Mar. 01	R	<i>Class practice 1: Human learning experiment</i>	<i>No reading required</i>
Mar. 06	T	Class devoted to questions (Chapters 1-4)	
Mar. 08	R	Midterm exam	(class time)
Mar. 13	T	<i>Class practice 2: Simulating learning</i>	<i>No reading required</i> <i>Assignment announced</i>
Mar. 15	R	Instrumental conditioning: Foundations	Domjan: Chapter 05
Mar. 20	T	Instrumental conditioning: Foundations	Domjan: Chapter 05
Mar. 22	R	Schedules of reinforcement and choice behavior	Domjan: Chapter 06
Mar. 27	T	Schedules of reinforcement and choice behavior	Domjan: Chapter 06
Mar. 29	R	Instrumental conditioning: Motivational mechanisms	Domjan: Chapter 07
Apr. 03	T	Instrumental conditioning: Motivational mechanisms	Domjan: Chapter 07
Apr. 05	R	Stimulus control of behavior	Domjan: Chapter 08 <i>Assignment due</i>
Apr. 17	T	Stimulus control of behavior	Domjan: Chapter 08
Apr. 19	R	Extinction of conditioned behavior	Domjan: Chapter 09
Apr. 24	T	Extinction of conditioned behavior	Domjan: Chapter 09
Apr. 26	R	Aversive control: Avoidance and punishment	Domjan: Chapter 10
May 01	T	Aversive control: Avoidance and punishment	Domjan: Chapter 10
May 03	R	Class devoted to questions (Chapters 5-10)	
May 08	T		
May 15	T	Final exam	(1:30 pm – 3:30 pm)