

Department of Psychology
Trent University -Trent in Oshawa
PSYC 2600H-A: Introduction to Learning
2011 FA OSH

Instructor: Murray Stainton
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Office Location: Thornton Faculty Wing Cubicles
Office Hours: Before class (4:30-5:30 PM) by appt. via email
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Course Description: We will examine the fundamental concepts of learning in humans and other animals, with an emphasis on empirical methods of investigation. Topics to be covered include in-depth examinations of classical and operant conditioning, observational learning, and escape and avoidance learning. The course text will give a general overview of the theories and research within the learning literature. The lectures will present some of this information and will engage you in the material more actively with the use of problem-based learning activities requiring significant student participation. The lectures will also often present an examination of the material from an evolutionary psychological perspective, when applicable. The seminars will involve similar but more in-depth exercises involving application of material gleaned from the text, from lectures, and from assigned readings (when applicable).

Course Format: **Lecture:** Thursdays, 5:30 to 7:20 PM in room TBA
Seminar: Following every other class – either 7:30 to 8:20 or 8:30 to 9:20 PM

Prerequisite(s): Introductory Psychology.

Required Readings: Powell, R.A., Symbaluk, D.G., & McDonald, S.E. (2009) *Introduction to learning and behavior* (3rd ed.). Toronto, ON: Thomson/Wadsworth.

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Recommended Text: Mitchell, M. L., Jolley, J. M., & O'Shea, R. P. (2010). *Writing for psychology* (3rd edition.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Evaluation:	1. Seminar Participation	15% - See "Seminar Schedule" below
	2. Midterm Test	25% - October 13 th
	3. Written Assignment	25% - November 3 rd
	4. Final Exam	35% - December 15 th

Note; It is the responsibility of each student to read and accept the due dates outlined.

Learning Objectives

- **Learning and Behaviourism:** Expect to learn about the field of Learning and Behaviourism, including key theories and research, and unique aspects of this field of psychology.
- **Psychological Perspective:** Expect to develop your ability to understand and interpret psychological research and the scientific method, and begin to use the psychological perspective to understand issues of behaviourism.
- **Cognitive Development:** Expect to improve your own critical thinking skills and learn how to draw on research evidence as you think about the world conscious and unconscious learning.
- **Communication Development:** Expect to develop your oral and written communication skills through your assignment and class discussions. Learn how to use APA style in your writing.
- **Applying Behaviourism:** Expect to experience and learn to explain learning principles in action by applying them to your own self-modification program.

Explanation of Assignments

1. Participation (15% in total):
See "Course Policy on attendance in class/labs" below for details.
Seminar Topics TBA with appropriate notice when preparation is required.

2. Midterm Test (25%) – The midterm test will assess students' grasp of material up to the midpoint in the course. The midterm test will consist of multiple-choice, short answer, and longer-answer questions. The midterm test will be held during the lecture period on **Thursday, October 13th, 5:30 - 7:20 PM.**

3. Written Assignment (25%)

Title: Designing, Applying, and Evaluating a Self-Modification Program

Format and Length: The completed assignment will be in report format with clear subsections and subheadings that will be provided in an electronic template emailed to students later in the term (more on this in class). It will be at least 7 - 8 double-spaced typed pages (body only) and have additional title, reference, and appendix (tables, charts, etc.) pages.

There will be much more guidance, instruction, and documentation regarding this assignment given in class (and via email).

Students are **STRONGLY** advised to consult with me regarding their choice of topic. This is not required, but will assure that you have chosen a behaviour suitable for modification and for the assignment. The assignment is due at the beginning of class **Thursday, November 3rd, 2011** at the beginning of class. Extensions will only be granted on documented medical or compassionate grounds. **Late papers will not be accepted.**

Course Policy on Late Submissions

IMPORTANT NOTE: There are no provisions for late assignments or for extensions. Late assignments will receive a grade of 0 (zero). Emergency situations will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Let me make this perfectly clear. **Unless you are physically incapacitated, you should arrive in class with your assignment on the date and at the time it is due or be prepared to explain what happened that it is not completed.**

4. Final Exam (30%) – The final examination will consist of multiple-choice, short answer, and longer-answer questions covering material primarily from that discussed after the midterm test. It will be held during the exam period (**December 15th**). Students **MUST NOT** make travel plans during this period.

Course Policy on attendance in class/labs

** Note that some of each lecture and seminar may be devoted to material (and activities) that is/are beyond the textbook. If you miss classes, you are responsible for obtaining notes from a classmate (or two is better), as all material (and any interactive class activity) is considered 'testable'.

Seminars – This is a course requiring a great deal of YOUR thinking and participation. Students will be expected to participate **substantially** in discussions about assigned seminar topics and assigned readings. In each of the seminars, students will receive a score of 0 (did not attend seminar), 1 (attended seminar but did not participate substantially), or between 1.5 and 3 marks for effective, prepared (if applicable), thoughtful participation.

Seminar Schedule:

Number	Date	<u>Group A/B Dates</u>	<u>Group C/D Dates</u>
1.		Sept 15	Sept 22
2.		Sept 29	Oct 6
3.		Oct 13	Nov 3
4.		Nov 10	Nov 17
5.		Nov 24	Dec 1

Note that there will be no seminar meeting on the day of the Midterm Test (Thursday, Oct 13th). However, any "disruption" in the seminar schedule may make it necessary to hold a seminar the day of the midterm exam and/or cause groups to switch days.

Note: When reading or other preparation are required for seminars, readings or required preparation will be provided/announced at least 3 days prior to the seminar in question.

Class Schedule:

Date	Discussion Topic and Assigned Readings
Sept 8	Course Requirements, Schedule, Seminar/Lab Organization
Sept 15	Introduction to Learning Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 1
Sept 22	Learning Research Methods Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 2
Sept 29	From Elicited Behaviours (Reflexes) to Simple Classical Conditioning Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 3 Discussion of Assignment
Oct 6	Classical Conditioning: From Basic to Complex Phenomena Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 4 Review for Test
Oct 13	Midterm Test (25%)
Oct 20	Introduction to Operant (Instrumental) Conditioning Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 6; Take Up Midterm Test
Oct 27	NO CLASS – Reading Week
Nov 3	Theories and Schedules of Reinforcement in Operant Learning Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 7 Assignment due
Nov 10	Extinction and Stimulus Control Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 8
Nov 17	Escape, Avoidance, and Punishment Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 9
Nov 24	Observational Learning, Language, and Rule-Governed Behaviour Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 12
Dec 1	Biological Dispositions in Learning (time permitting) Powell, et al. (2009), Chapter 11 Final Exam Review
Dec 15	Final Exam

University Policies

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from a 0 grade on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more – www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity.

ACCESS TO INSTRUCTION:

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

Departmental Policy on Tests, Exams, and Assignments

A. MIDTERMS & FINAL EXAMINATIONS

Midterm examinations for half courses within the Psychology Department are scheduled by the instructor of the course. Midterm examinations for full courses and final examination for all courses are scheduled by the Registrar's Office. Students are strongly urged NOT to make any commitments (i.e., vacation, job related, or other travel plans) during either the term as a whole or the final examination period. Students are required to be available for all examinations during the periods for which they are scheduled (as published in course syllabi).

B. DEFERRAL OF MIDTERM / FINAL EXAMINATIONS and/or TERM WORK

Extensions of deadlines for completion of assignments or writing of midterms/final examinations may be granted to students on the basis of illness, accident, or other extreme and legitimate circumstances beyond their control. Consideration for deferrals will not normally be granted on the basis of vacation/travel plans or job-related obligations.

C. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Students should expect that supporting documentation will be required and must be submitted before a deferral is approved. For illness or accident, supporting documentation will take the form of: (1) the Trent University Medical Certificate from Health Services: (<http://www.trentu.ca/healthservices/medical.html>), or (2) a certificate or letter from the attending physician clearly indicating the start and end dates of the illness and the student's inability to write an examination, complete assignments, and/or attend classes, as relevant to the particular request. For other circumstances, students should consult the individual Psychology faculty member about acceptable forms of documentation.

Notes

1. Academic Integrity:

For the purpose of interpreting and applying the University policy on academic dishonesty, the Department of Psychology has adopted the following:

When a student submits a piece of written work in fulfillment of an assignment, he/she implicitly acknowledges the following: a) that she/he is the sole author of the work; b) that the wording and organization of the work, apart from acknowledged quotations, is her/his own; and c) that she/he has not and will not submit this work, either as a whole or in part, to satisfy another course requirement. These basic assumptions will be reasonably interpreted. They do not preclude collaboration between students upon a single project, by prior arrangement with the instructor, for shared academic credit (either for written or oral presentation).

For an elaboration of the Department's policy on, and for specific examples of, plagiarism, students should consult the sections on academic honesty (pp. 6-8), and appropriate citing and referencing (pp. 135-137, 169) in Mitchell et al. (2010). Students who have doubts about what might be considered academic dishonesty are urged to consult the instructor of the course. Ignorance of the University or Department policy does not excuse academic dishonesty. Submissions that fail to meet one or more of these considerations will be subject to procedures laid down in the policy on academic dishonesty as stated in the University calendar.

2. It is the policy of the Department NOT to accept faxed assignments.
3. The same assignment cannot be submitted in more than one course without the prior written permission of all instructors concerned. The written approval must be attached to the work when it is submitted.
4. Students are required to use American Psychological Association style (6th edition), for all written assignments.
5. **Please see the Trent University academic calendar for University Diary dates, Academic Information and Regulations, and University and departmental degree requirements.**
6. **Last date to withdraw from a Summer half-term course without academic penalty in 2011 is November 9, 2011.**