

Learning Processes

Summer 2020 – Jennifer Francesconi



Instructor: Jennifer Francesconi

Office: Busch Psychology Building, room 323

Office hours: by appointment remotely via Skype (or other virtual meeting platform)

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When and Where: Mon-Thurs remotely via Canvas

Textbook: The Principles of Learning and Behavior, 7th Edition. By Michael Domjan (2010; 2015) (Other versions of the book also do the trick)

** You can purchase this text as an eBook online at www.cengagebrain.com for \$30**

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce you to the science of behavior through exploring the acquisition, storage, and expression of learning at the behavioral level. How do we study behavior across different species? How can we understand the causes of behavior? Research in behavioral psychology has helped us understand the complexity of behavior with the establishment of tools and techniques that reveal the relationship between behavior to innate processes, learning processes, and motivational processes.

Course Aims and Outcomes:

In taking pre-requisite courses (i.e. psychology, neuroscience, biology, etc.) you already have a fundamental understanding of how the brain works. This course will expand your existing knowledge and offer insight on how the brain connects what we *experience* with how we *behave*. We will discuss at length the field of behavioral psychology and the importance of this field in understanding real-world scenarios in education, mood related disorders, sports, addiction, learning and memory, intelligent machines, and the list goes on.

Specific Outcomes:

- Understand different ways in which learning occurs
- Develop understanding of how aspects from our natural environment shape our behavior
- Develop the ability to think logically and analytically about behavior and why/how it changes
- Understand how deficits in learning processes has components in psychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders
- Develop an appreciation for research using animals that helps us better understand biological basis of behavior and its relationship to human behavior
- Develop an appreciation of historical and modern approaches to our understanding of basic learning processes
- Apply content discussed in class to real-life scenarios, discussions, and study habits

Remote learning and time management:

This class will be delivered remotely via Canvas. This class will have assignments due each week so this is not a self-paced course. You cannot wait until the end of the semester to complete assignments, you must submit each assignment by its due date listed on the syllabus. You will need to use time management skills to ensure that you allot yourself enough time each week to read the assigned materials and watch/listen to/read the lecture slides so that you can actively participate in each week's assignments.

Grading

Exams: There will be 3 exams (2 midterms and a final) that will test your critical thinking skills, not retention/memorization of facts. To do well on the exams you need to understand the material and the concepts discussed in class. Exams will be multiple choice and will cover material discussed in class. The final exam will be cumulative. Topics covered in the text book, but not in class, will not be on the exam.

Make-up exam policy: You need to provide both 1) advance notice of your absence to me (via email) and 2) acceptable documentation for the absence (e.g., doctor's note, death notice, obituary, funeral notice, police report etc.). If both of these criteria are not met you will not be permitted to take a make-up exam. The make-up exam will include a combination of both multiple choice and essay style questions.

Exams are due Sunday by 11:59 PM.

Discussion board posts (questions AND answers): Each week you will post in the course discussion board. The content of the post will vary each week. For example, you may be given a prompt by me, asked to find real-world examples of a learning process, or asked to critically reflect on a journal article that I assign. I encourage you to ask questions, and discuss experiments and ideas with your peers. We all have ideas of how the world and universe as well as our brain and behavior work, so discussions in this class will focus on "HOW" and "WHY." This course assumes a biological basis of behavior, with a core idea being that the processes of the mind that control behavior are based in biology of the body and brain.

In order to receive credit for discussion board posts you must contribute meaningfully to the discussion each week. A "meaningful contribution" includes: well thought out questions, comments, and insights about the material covered that week or to the prompt, etc. You must also answer or comment (meaningfully) to at least one classmate's post each week.

Discussion board posts are due every Thursday by 11:59 PM, and your response to a classmate's post is due every Sunday by 11:59 PM.

Late Assignments (only applicable for the discussion board): If the discussion board assignment(s) are not submitted on the due date it will be considered **LATE** - no exceptions! Students submitting assignments late will lose 10% of the points for that assignment each day it is late.

Paper: You will submit a 1-2 page single-spaced paper applying what you have learned to your future. In other words you will answer questions such as: "What did you learn in this course?", "What can you take with you?", and similarly, "With the knowledge you gained in this course, what can you bring to the table in your future career?". Psychology is a diverse field in which you

can pursue many different careers (e.g. Human Resources, Parole Officer, Child Care Worker, Career Counselor, etc.). At first blush it may not be apparent to you or to others how knowledge of learning and behavior may benefit you and render you an invaluable asset to your future employer and career position. This is a way to sell yourself and your knowledge, and to dig deep about how these learning principles are ubiquitous and applicable across many fields of work!

Late submissions are NOT accepted for the paper. You must hand the paper in by the due date, no make-ups.

Participation: Participation points will be based on the discussion board posts and overall involvement in the course.

Grade calculation

The maximum total is 300.

Assignment	Maximum Points
Exam 1	50
Exam 2	50
Final Exam	75
Discussion board assignments	50
Paper	50
Participation	25

Points needed for each grade

To keep track of your performance, think in terms of points below the maximum. In other words, if you are wanting to achieve an A in this course the loss of 30 or more points among all assignments will not make an A attainable. A friendly reminder a grade is not given to you; it is something you earn.

Grade	Points	Percentage
A	270-300	90-100%
B+	255-269	85-89.9%
B	240-254	80-84.9%
C+	225-239	75-79.9%
C	210-224	70-74.9%
D	180-209	60-69.9%
F	0-179	0-59.9%

*A piece of advice: If you seek to do extra work in order to get a higher grade do it throughout the semester, not after it is over! Complete all assignments, study hard, ask questions and become engaged.

Grading disputes (shall you have any):

You have 7 days after an assignment/exam/paper grade is posted to dispute your grade. Whether or not I feel the dispute is warranted is up to my discretion.

Additional Stuff

Academic Dishonesty: This matter is taken very seriously, so please do yourself the favor and don't try it. Discussion of ideas and concepts with your peers is welcomed, but responses on quizzes, exams, and discussion board posts must be your individual work. A **ZERO** will be given if there is reason to believe that any part of your work is not your own. Cheating and plagiarism will not be taken lightly and could even result in automatic failure of the course as well as result in University disciplinary action.

Accommodations

Appropriate accommodations are available for students with disabilities. In compliance with the Rutgers University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, unless for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with the Office of Disability Services to verify eligibility for appropriate accommodations and to provide me with documentation. Please see web site of the [Office of Disability Services for Students](https://ods.rutgers.edu/) (<https://ods.rutgers.edu/>) for more information.

Academic Integrity (amended from summer 2017 syllabus: Kaisa Bieszczad 830:311 Learning Processes)

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Rutgers University Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Collaboration in this course is allowed in the following instances: *research strategies, peer-review of drafts of essay, or other instances based upon special requests and my approval.*

Exams are out-of-class, working together on these exams is forbidden. Answering exam questions should be your own work. Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied could both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of the University Code of Student Conduct can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. The risk really isn't worth it. Visit <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources-for-students> for info and useful links.

Week	Date	Book Chapters	Assignment(s) due by 11:59 PM	Assignment(s) due by 11:59 PM
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			during the week*	on Sundays*
Week 1	May 26	Chapter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of syllabus • Lecture slides 	
	May 27	Chapter 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	May 28	Chapters 1 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion board assignment (due May 28th by 11:59 PM) 	Response to at least one classmate's discussion board post Due May 31st by 11:59 PM
Week 2	June 1	Chapter 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 2	Chapter 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 3	Chapters 1 - 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review session (optional) • Study guide 	
	June 4	Chapters 1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion board assignment (due June 4th by 11:59 PM) 	Exam 1 Due June 7th by 11:59 PM
Week 3	June 8	Chapter 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 9	Chapter 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 10	Chapters 5 - 6		
	June 11	Chapters 5 - 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion board assignment (due June 11th by 11:59 PM) 	Response to at least one classmate's discussion board post Due June 14th by 11:59 PM
Week 4	June 15	Chapter 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 16	Chapter 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 17	Chapters 7 - 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review session (optional) • Study guide 	
	June 18	Chapters 5 - 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion board assignment (due June 18th by 11:59 PM) 	Exam 2 Due June 21st by 11:59 PM Response to at least one classmate's discussion board post Due June 21st by 11:59 PM
Week 5	June 22	Chapter 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 23	Chapter 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 24	Chapters 9 - 10		
	June 25	Chapters 9 - 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion board assignment (due June 25th by 11:59 PM) 	Response to at least one classmate's discussion board post Due June 28th by 11:59 PM
Week 6	June 29	Chapter 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	June 30	Chapter 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture slides 	
	July 1	Chapters 9 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review session (optional) • Study guide 	
	July 2			Paper (due July 2nd by 11:59 PM)

Course Schedule (dates are subject to change)

*Final Exam check the Rutgers academic calendar to determine when final exam for this class is