

University of Alberta

**Psychology 381: Principles of Learning**

Fall Term, 2017

Tuesday & Thursday, 14:00 – 15:20, BS M-145

Instructor: Jenna V. Congdon
Office: BS P-539
e-mail: jcongdon@ualberta.ca
Office hours: Thursdays 15:30-16:30 (or by appointment)
eClass: PSYCO 381 Principles of Learning (LEC A1 Fa17)

Teaching Assistant: William Service, wservice@ualberta.ca, BS P-541
 (Office hours by appointment)

Note: Students are also encouraged to use the discussion board on eClass

Course prerequisites: STAT 141 or SCI 151; PSYCO 282 or PSYCO 281

Required textbook: Domjan, M. P. (2015). *The Principles of Learning & Behavior* (7th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

Additional notes: The additional online learning resource, MindTap, is highly recommended but not required. Also, refer to the course page for links to papers discussed in class and websites with related material.

Course Description

In this course we will examine a variety of fundamental learning processes, primarily as investigated through research with non-human subjects. We will begin with an examination of elementary forms of learning and then progress to a consideration of more complex learning and cognitive processes. Some specific phenomena we will examine include: habituation and sensitization, classical (Pavlovian) conditioning, operant (instrumental) conditioning, discrimination learning, memory and cognition in animals. The main focus of this course will be on understanding the mechanisms that underlie these various forms of learning. Thus, the treatment of these topics will be considerably more theoretical than in the prerequisite course (PSYCO 282). Although the primary focus of this course is on structural analyses of learning processes, some consideration will also be given to the biological function and neural bases of learning and cognitive processes.

Course Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes

The objective of this course is to introduce you to advanced issues in animal learning and cognition. This will include gaining an understanding of some of the neural mechanisms involved in the learning and cognitive phenomena that we discuss. In addition to these primary objectives, the course is designed around using primary sources and original research in course instruction. Students are expected to gain a deeper understanding of animal learning and cognition, to learn how to critically evaluate original research, and to express ideas about the subject matter in written form.

Tentative Schedule (subject to change[†]): Approximately one (1) chapter will be covered each week. Please note that September 18, 2017 is the last day to add/drop classes and December 1, 2017 is the last day for withdrawal from Fall Term courses. The week of November 13th will be reading week and no classes will be held.

WEEK	Topic
1 – September 5/7	Introduction (Ch. 1)
2 – September 12/14	Elicited Behavior, Habituation, & Sensitization (Ch. 2)
3 – September 19/21	Classical Conditioning: Foundations (Ch. 3)
4 – September 26/28	Classical Conditioning: Mechanisms (Ch. 4)
5 – October 3/5	Midterm 1 [Oct 3] Instrumental Conditioning (Ch. 5)
6 – October 10/12	Reinforcement and Choice (Ch. 6)
7 – October 17/19	Motivation in Instrumental Conditioning (Ch. 7)
8 – October 24/26	Stimulus Control (Ch. 8)
9 – October 31/November 2	Midterm 2 [Oct 31] Extinction (Ch. 9)
10 – November 7/9	Aversive Control (Ch. 10)
11 – November 14/16	<i>Reading Week</i> [No classes]
12 – November 21/23*	Memory (Ch. 11) Written Assignment Due [Nov 23]
13 – November 28/30	Memory (Ch. 11)/Comparative Cognition (Ch. 12)
14 – December 5/7	Comparative Cognition (Ch. 12)/Review
15 – December 14**	Tentative Final Exam Date [Thursday @ 2:00pm, TBD]

[†]I reserve the right to make changes to this outline as the course progresses

*Assignment due at 11PM on Thursday, November 23rd. Late assignments will be deducted two marks per 24 hour period past submission deadline.

**WARNING: Students must verify this date and the location when the Final Exam Schedule is posted!

Grade Allocation

Midterms (2)	25%	Midterm 1: Tuesday, October 3rd @ 2:00pm
	25%	Midterm 2: Tuesday, October 31st @ 2:00pm
Written Assignment*	15%	Thursday, November 23rd @ 11:00pm
Final Exam**	35%	Thursday, December 14th @ 2:00pm
(cumulative)		
Total	100%	

Written Assignment - Journal Article Summary (15%)

There will be one written assignment based on briefly summarizing and critically evaluating a journal article. The assignment is to be two pages, double-spaced, 12 size Times New Roman font, with normal (1in) margins, according to APA format. Any material over two pages will not be marked. This assignment is to be completed individually. A more precise guideline for the written assignment will be posted on eClass.

Midterms (25% each) & Final Exam (35%)

Both of the midterms (October 3rd & October 31st) and the final (tentatively December 14th) will cover material from both the lectures and textbook up to and including the class prior to each examination. These exams can consist of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, definition, and short answer. Representative exam questions will be posted on eClass prior to the first midterm. *There is NO possibility of a reexamination in this course.* The

final exam will be CUMULATIVE, however, the emphasis will be on materials from the latter third of the course (i.e., lectures since Midterm 2).

A student who fails to write the **MIDTERM** due to incapacitating illness, severe domestic affliction, or other compelling reasons must formally apply for an *excused absence*. Excused absences are not automatic and are granted at the discretion of the instructor; unacceptable reasons that include, but are not limited to personal events such as vacation, weddings, or travel arrangements. For excused absence from the midterm exam, the weight of the missed midterm will be transferred to the final exam. You must contact the instructor via e-mail from your University of Alberta e-mail account within 48h following the scheduled date of the midterm missed to apply for this. Students who have missed the midterm will be required to write a longer final exam that will include additional questions from the first two-thirds of the term. When a student misses a midterm *without an acceptable excuse*, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of **zero** for the missed midterm.

A student who fails to write the **FINAL EXAM** due to incapacitating illness, severe domestic affliction, or other compelling reasons must formally apply for a *deferred final examination*. Such an application must be made to **your Faculty office** within 48 hours of the missed examination and must be supported by a Statutory Declaration or other appropriate documentation (Calendar section 23.5.6). Deferred examinations are a privilege and not a right; there is no guarantee that a deferred examination will be granted. Misrepresentation of Facts to gain a deferred examination is a serious breach of the *Code of Student Behaviour*. The deferred final exam will take place on **Friday, January 12, 2018 at 14:00 hrs.**

Note: For an excused absence where the cause is religious conviction, a student must contact the instructor within two weeks of the start of classes to request accommodation for the term (including the final exam, when relevant). Instructors can request adequate documentation to substantiate the student request.

Grading

Exam and assignment marks will be tallied at the end of the course and converted to the 4-point/letter grade. The grading will be loosely based on the table below; however, I reserve the right to apply adjustments using my expert judgement so your demonstrated ability corresponds to the letter grade descriptors specified by Calendar section 23.4(4). This course is NOT graded on a curve. Grades are unofficial until approved by the Department and/or Faculty offering the course.

Percentage Grade	University Grade	Meaning
85 – 89.99, 90 – 94.99, 95 – 100 %	A-, A, A+	Excellent
70 – 74.99, 75 – 79.99 , 80 – 84.99 %	B-, B, B+	Good
60 – 62.99, 63 – 66.99 , 67 – 69.99 %	C-, C, C+	Satisfactory
55 – 59.99 %	D+	Poor
50 – 54.99	D	Minimal pass
0 – 49.99 %	F	Failure

Student Responsibilities

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: "The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University." *Ignorance is not a viable defense.*

All forms of dishonesty are unacceptable at the University. Any offence will be reported to the Senior Associate Dean of Science who will determine the disciplinary action to be taken. Cheating, plagiarism and misrepresentation of facts are serious offences. Anyone who engages in these practices will receive at minimum a grade of zero for the exam or assignment in question and no opportunity will be given to replace the grade or redistribute the weights. As well, in the Faculty of Science the sanction for *cheating* on any examination will include a **disciplinary failing grade** (no exceptions) and senior students should expect a period of **suspension or expulsion** from the University of Alberta.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE: As adults in a higher education course, I expect each of you to behave appropriately during class, out of respect for myself, our TA, and your classmates. Electronic devices are to be used for classroom purposes, such as note-taking; texting or browsing social media is an inappropriate use of class time. Frequent talking or disruptions will not be tolerated; the individual(s) causing the disruption will be warned once then asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the lecture. I encourage questions during the lecture, but please avoid discussion with other students as it is distracting to you, your peers, and myself.

E-MAIL POLICY: Please put "PSYCO 381" in the subject line of all e-mails. I will do my best to answer your e-mails promptly, but cannot guarantee an immediate response. Please e-mail well in advance of deadline/exams and please wait at the very least 24h before sending a follow-up e-mail. If you are confused about a concept discussed in class, please stop by for my office hour. When asking a question about course material via e-mail, please first include what you think the answer is or what you think the concept means (e.g., instead of e-mailing "I don't understand concept X", please instead e-mail something like "I'm confused by concept X. I think it means A, B, and C but I am confused about how A leads to B and C.") Otherwise, I will ask you to first provide this information before writing a lengthy e-mail. This process shows that you have thought about the material before just immediately asking for help. I am more than happy to help students who put in the effort to understand the material. **Before e-mailing a question, please check to see if the information that you need is in the syllabus (e.g., date of midterm, final exam format, etc.).**

POWERPOINT SLIDES: The lectures will be delivered via PowerPoint slides. These slides will be posted to eClass before each class. Slides will be complete allowing for more time to take notes on the additional information conveyed by the presenter (i.e., instructor or guest lecturer).

RECORDING AND/OR DISTRIBUTION OF COURSE MATERIALS: Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s). Each class will be recorded by the instructor's computer; if you speak during class and wish for your voice to be removed, please let me know after class and I will edit the recording before posting it. These recordings will be an additional resource in the event that a student misses class or students wish to re-listen to the lecture material.

EXAMS: Students will not be allowed to begin an examination after it has been in progress for 30 minutes. Students must remain in the exam room until at least 30 minutes has elapsed. Electronic equipment cannot be used in the examination room and hats should not be worn. Your student photo I.D. is required at exams to verify your identity.

CELL PHONES: Cell phones are to be turned off during lectures, labs and seminars. Cell phones are NOT to be used or even visible during exams.

STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR ACCESSIBILITY-RELATED

ACCOMMODATIONS: Eligible students have both rights and responsibilities with regard to accessibility-related accommodations. Consequently, scheduling exam accommodations in accordance with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) deadlines and procedures is essential. Please note adherence to procedures and deadlines is required for U of A to provide accommodations. Contact SSDS (www.ssds.ualberta.ca) for further information, located in 1-80 Students' Union Building.

Disclaimer: Any errors in this Course Outline are subject to change and will be announced in class. The date of the final examination is set by the Registrar and takes precedence over the final examination date reported in this syllabus.

Policy about course outlines can be found in section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.

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