Instructor: Abdolhossein Abdollahy Zarandi, Ph.D.
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Office: Department of Psychology, Room 116
Class Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 9am -10:20am
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11am-1pm (To make an appointment, please email me.)

Course Objectives and Description

The main objective of this course is to help students explore and understand the principles of behavior modification and apply them in relevant settings. Behavior modification, as an applied area of psychology, involves analyzing verbal and nonverbal behavior; that is, what we say and do. It comes out of the heart of radical behaviorism introduced by the American psychologist, B. F. Skinner. According to Skinner, any specific behavior depends on what comes before it (antecedents) and after it (consequences). In this course, the relationship between behavior and its antecedents and consequences will be explored and applied by students.

Course Text


Course Format

Tuesday: Lectures and Student Engagement
Thursday: Lectures and Student Engagement

Course Assignments

One goal of this course is to apply the principles of behavior in relevant settings. A convenient starting point to attain this goal is to modify a behavior of your own. Naturally we like/want to change or develop a behavior that is undesirable/desirable to us and/or others. This is a good opportunity for you to test out your ability as a behavior modifier and also to eliminate or reduce an undesirable behavior or to develop or increase a desirable behavior in you. You can choose one or more than one verbal and nonverbal (motor) behavior, create a design, implement it, and write a report about it. More specifically, you will a) identify an undesirable behavior, b) gather baseline data, c) identify the antecedents of the behavior, d) identify the consequences of the behavior and e) change the antecedents and consequences of behavior to observe a result. Likewise, if you like/want to develop or increase a desirable behavior in your behavioral repertoire, you can get through a similar procedure (e.g., by shaping). Examples of to-be-modified undesirable and desirable behaviors abound. We will talk about them during the first class meetings. You
will have ample time to learn about how to run the project in these meetings. As for the report write-up, it is to be noted that the final report must be written in accordance with the guidelines provided by the APA Publication Manual (6th edition).

Quizzes and Exams

You will take four random unannounced quizzes and two cumulative exams throughout the semester (see Course Assessment below). The quizzes and exams consist of multiple-choice and short answer items. The exams dates are specified in the course timetable (see below). Each quiz begins at 9am and takes 15 minutes to finish. Also, as mentioned above, the quizzes will be introduced in a random unannounced manner.

Class Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is expected because you can learn better when you are physically present. Also, there will be four random unannounced quizzes throughout the semester (both on Tuesdays and Thursdays). Missing a quiz means losing an influential portion of the final grade.

Course Assessment

1. Behavior modification project 20%
2. Four quizzes, each 5% 20%
3. Two exams, each 30% 60%

Grading Scale:

90% - 100% = A
80% - 89.9% = B
70% - 79.9% = C
60% - 69.9% = D
00% - 59.9% = F

Classroom Behavior

Please turn off your cell phone on arrival. Don’t talk when others are talking. If you want to ask a question or make a comment, raise your hand and try not to interrupt others as they speak. Don’t use your computer for irrelevant in-class activities such as emailing, visiting a social network profile, playing games, watching videos, listening to music and so on. These activities prevent you from focusing on lectures and other class engagements and may distract other students.
Disability

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass.

Academic Conduct, Discipline, and Integrity

It is assumed that students are implicitly aware of the principles of academic conduct, discipline, and integrity. But having an explicit knowledge of the principles will be highly beneficial for anybody working within the realm of academia. The following link provides wide-range information about academic conduct and discipline at UTEP. Please read the file carefully and enthusiastically:

http://admin.utep.edu/LinkClick.aspx?link=HOOP-Section+II.pdf&tabid=30181&mid=63285

Course Timetable

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Week 1  
January 21: Chapter 1 The Reinforcer (Positive Reinforcer)  
January 23: Chapter 2 (Reinforcement (Positive Reinforcement)  
Week 2  
January 28: Chapter 3 Escape (Negative Reinforcement)  
January 30: Chapter 4 Punishment (Positive Punishment)  
Week 3  
February 4: Chapter 5 Penalty (Negative Punishment)  
February 6: Chapter 6 Extinction (Following Reinforcement) and Recovery  
Week 4  
February 11: Chapter 7 Differential Reinforcement and Differential Punishment  
February 13: Chapter 8 Shaping  
Week 5  
February 18: Chapter 9 Unlearned Reinforcers, Unlearned Aversive Stimuli  
February 20: Chapter 10 Special Motivating Operations
Week 6
February 25: Chapter 11 Learned Reinforcers and Learned Aversive Stimuli
February 27: Chapter 12 Discrimination

Week 7
March 4: Chapter 13 Complex Stimulus Control
March 6: Chapter 14 Imitation

Week 8
March 11: No Classes
March 13: No Classes

Week 9
March 18: Chapter 15 Avoidance
March 20: Exam

Week 10
March 25: Chapter 16 Punishment by Prevention
March 27: Chapter 17 Ratio Schedules

Week 11
April 1: Chapter 18 Interval Schedules
April 3: Chapter 19 Concurrent Contingencies

Week 12
April 8: Chapter 20 Behavioral Chains and Differential Reinforcement of Low Rate
April 10: Chapter 21 Respondent Conditioning

Week 13
April 15: Chapter 22 Rule-Governed Behavior: Concepts
April 17: Chapter 23 Rule-Governed Behavior: Applications

Week 14
April 22: Chapter 24 Rule-Governed Behavior: Theory
April 24: Chapter 25 Pay for Performance
Week 15
April 29: Chapter 26A and 26B Sexuality and Moral and Legal Control
May 1: Chapter 27 Maintenance

Week 16
May 6: Chapter 28 Transfer
May 8: Chapter 29 Research Methods and Chapter 30 Jobs and Grad School
May 12-16: Final Exams

Note. This syllabus is tentative and subject to change depending upon the class progress.