

**Principles of Learning
PSYC 304 – A01
Summer 2013**

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Brielmaier
Class time: MTWR 9:30-11:45 am
Class location: West 1008
Office hours: Tues. 12-1 pm

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Office location: DK 2063

Course description:

This course offers an introduction to the experimental analysis of learning and behavior. Although the main focus will be on animal learning in laboratory experiments, the importance of basic learning mechanisms for understanding both animal and human behavior will be stressed. Topics to be covered include non-associative and associative learning, instrumental (operant) conditioning, extinction of learned behaviors, factors that affect the quality and content of learning, and learning and memory mechanisms across different species.

Class sessions will consist of a series of lectures and guided activities, with assignments, quizzes and exams to be completed in class. All assignments are described in detail below.

Enrollment in a PSYC 304 lab section is required. The final grade for this course will be based on the combined grades you earn in the lecture (60%) and the lab (40%).

PSYC 304 fulfills the writing intensive requirement for the Psychology major. In the lab portion of the course you will have multiple writing assignments that build upon one another and the total amount of writing will equal or exceed GMU's 3500-word minimum for a writing intensive course.

Required Texts:

Lecture: Domjan, M. P. (2009). *The Principles of Learning and Behavior, Sixth Edition*. ISBN-13: 978-0-495-60199-9.

Lab: Alloway, T., Wilson, G., & Graham, J. (2011). *Sniffy the Virtual Rat Pro, Version 3.0*. ISBN-13: 978-1-111-72625-6.

Course objectives:

As a result of completing work in this course, students will be able to:

- Identify major historical timelines and perspectives associated with the study of learning.
- Describe and analyze experimental findings demonstrating the role of learning in shaping behavior in humans and nonhuman animals.
- Integrate behavioral learning phenomena with how behavior systems have been shaped by evolution.
- Understand how learning theory can be applied to real-world domains inside and outside of psychology.

Assignments:

- **Readings:** Assigned readings will consist of chapters from the textbook. Our time together in class will be much more productive if you come to class prepared. Part of being prepared is completing all readings **BEFORE** you come to class. You don't need to understand every

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word, but you need to have a clear idea of the overall concepts addressed and be prepared with possible questions or discussion points.

- **Quizzes:** There will be a total of three **unannounced** quizzes at the beginning of class covering material from the prior class session. These quizzes count for **extra credit** (up to 5 points per quiz) that will be added to the total of your final exam, and will be in the same format as the exams. **Because they count as extra credit, there will be no make-up quizzes allowed.**
- **In-Class Assignments:** I will provide time at least twice per week for you to complete an assignment during class. Assignments will relate to that day's material and will address topics that will be on the exams. Therefore, it is highly encouraged that you attend each class and complete the assignments. Depending on the day, assignments will be completed individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Bringing your textbook and lecture notes to class will help you complete the assignments. **You are allowed to drop two of these assignments; thus, there will be no make-ups.** These assignments will account for 10% of your final grade.
- **Answers to Sample Questions (due every Monday):** Each chapter of the Domjan text ends with sample questions. You must select 3 questions from the chapters we covered in class the week prior and provide a brief answer (~ ½ page typed and double spaced) for each. You may choose no more than 2 questions per chapter. Quoting the book or other sources is not permitted. You must use your own words to answer the questions. Answers will be turned in via the Blackboard SafeAssignment software to check for plagiarism and are due by **5 pm every Monday** (excluding the first class 5/20, and Memorial Day 5/27 when answers are due on Tuesday 5/28). These assignments will account for 10% of your final grade.
- **Exams:** There will be a total of three exams (two non-cumulative interim exams and one semi-cumulative final exam) consisting of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and/or short answer questions. The two interim exams you keep will each account for 25% of your final grade. The final exam will account for 30% of your final grade. **Exams cannot be dropped or made up.**

Attendance and Makeup Policies:

- **Attendance:** Attendance *per se* is not part of your grade for this course. However, arriving late, leaving early and/or failing to attend class will adversely affect your in-class assignment grade and will interfere with your ability to learn the course material. With that being said, I understand that emergencies do come up. If you must miss a class, please go to a classmate first for notes. I will be glad to meet with you about any questions after you do this. I also welcome questions via email anytime. If you must arrive to class early or leave late, please seat yourself as close to the door as possible to avoid any sort of disruption. **NOTE: You are responsible for all announcements and any syllabus modifications made in class each week whether you are present or not.**
- **Assignment Makeup Policy:** Because you are allowed to drop two of the in-class assignments without penalty, makeups are not allowed. Students who provide written medical or similar documentation explaining an extended absence from class (i.e., missing two or more consecutive classes) will be allowed to make up assignments at my discretion.

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Because they count for extra credit, makeup quizzes are not allowed under any circumstances, including arriving late to class the day a quiz is given.

- **Exam Makeup Policy:** Exam makeups will only be permitted with medical or similar documentation. Permission to postpone an exam will only be given for very acute and important reasons, at my discretion, and may incur a grade penalty of 10% per day.

Grading Breakdown:

In-Class Assignments (10%) + Answers to Sample Questions (10%) + Interim Exams (2 x 25% = 50%) + Final Exam (30%) = 100%

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A+ 97% or above	B+ 87-89%	C+ 77-79%	D 60-69%
A 93-96%	B 83-86%	C 73-76%	F 59% & below
A- 90-92%	B- 80-82%	C- 70-72%	

Incomplete (IN) grades will be assigned only in cases of compelling and documented need, in accordance with policies set forth in the University Catalog.

Official communications via GMU email:

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason email account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Technology statement:

Required knowledge of technology for this course includes ability to retrieve additional materials sent via email to your GMU address and/or posted on Blackboard. Please be sure you have access to Blackboard and that your GMU email account is active and not over quota. I will post relevant information and documents via the latest version of Microsoft Office, so make sure to have the latest version of office or download the converter in order to read all important documents.

Special Needs:

Every effort possible will be made to accommodate students with a disability or other special needs. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

The GMU Honor Code will be strictly enforced. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be reported to the University Honor Board and/or penalized. Plagiarism is defined as using another's work (e.g. words or ideas) without giving proper credit. Sources of information used in the case study presentation must be properly cited so as to avoid plagiarism. The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation.

Add/drop Deadline:

Last day to add and drop (no tuition penalty) – May 24th
Last day to drop (50% tuition penalty) – May 31st

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Tentative Schedule

NOTE: You are responsible for all announcements and any syllabus modifications made in class each week whether you are present or not.

Day	Date	Topic	Readings/ Assignments
M	May 20	Introduction, Historical Perspective, Definitions	Chapter 1 pp. 1-20
T	May 21	Methods, Use of Animals Elicited Behavior, Repeated Stimulation	Chapter 1 pp. 20-30 Chapter 2 pp. 31-53
W	May 22	Dual Process Theory, Emotion/Motivation Intro to Classical Conditioning	Chapter 2 pp. 53-65 Chapter 3 pp. 67-83
R	May 23	Classical Conditioning Procedures Prevalance of Classical Conditioning	Chapter 3 pp. 83-101
M	May 27	NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY	
T	May 28	Exam 1	SQ Answers #1 Due 5 pm
W	May 29	Classical Conditioning Mechanisms I	Chapter 4 pp. 103-123
R	May 30	Classical Conditioning Mechanisms II	Chapter 4 pp. 123-141
M	June 3	Instrumental Conditioning I	Chapter 5 pp. 143-157 SQ Answers #2 Due 5 pm
T	June 4	Instrumental Conditioning II	Chapter 5 pp. 157-184
W	June 5	Schedules of Reinforcement	Chapter 6 pp. 185-217
R	June 6	Motivational Mechanisms	Chapter 7 pp. 219-255
M	June 10	Exam 2	SQ Answers #3 Due 5 pm
T	June 11	Stimulus Control	Chapter 8 pp. 257-298
W	June 12	Extinction	Chapter 9 pp. 299-331
R	June 13	Avoidance and Punishment	Chapter 10 pp. 333-373
M	June 17	Comparative Cognition I	Chapter 11 pp. 375-418 SQ Answers #4 Due 5 pm
T	June 18	Comparative Cognition II Review	Chapter 12 pp. 420-427, 445-455
W	June 19	Reading Day	
R	June 20	FINAL EXAM, 9:30 am	