

# SYLLABUS - BEHV3200

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## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

- **Instructor Name:** Bryan S. Lovelace MS BCBA LBA
- **Phone:** 940-536-3211 (texting is best)
- **Office Hours:** By Appointment Only
- **Email Address:** bryan.lovelace@unt.edu

## REQUEST FOR ACCOMMODATIONS

The Department of Behavior Analysis in cooperation with the Office of Disability Accommodation, gladly complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodation for qualified students with disabilities. *You are required to present your written request for accommodation within 1 week of the first class period.*

## PURPOSE

This course will teach you how to utilize scientific critical thinking to examine various strange phenomena, including alleged paranormal events, magic, superstition, bogus therapies, pseudoscience, and psychics. One goal is to teach you how to think about weird things when you encounter them. Another goal is to teach you how to have an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out.

# COURSE MATERIALS

- This course uses the Top Hat platform (not canvas) to host course materials including the textbook.
- Top Hat is also used to take attendance and to provide grades for assignments.
- You must purchase access to Top Hat for the semester.
  - The least expensive way to purchase access to Top Hat is to buy access directly through their website: [www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com)
  - You must receive an invite from me to purchase Top Hat.
    - You must use your UNT email address to sign up for Top Hat.
  - Top Hat is required for this course.
  - Purchase the least expensive subscription and the textbook.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Define Paradigm Shift and describe why these are unique to science.
- Define the term 'comet' and describe where they come from and what they are made of.
- Describe the role that Stardust, Deep Impact, and Rosetta missions played in the study of comets.
- Describe the ancient view of comets.
- Describe how Isaac Newton discovered gravity.
- Describe the power of natural explanations.
- Define anomaly and describe what makes science different.
- Define two types of thinking errors.
- Define god of the gaps and how this relates to Xerxes, ancient Greeks, and Epilepsy.
- Describe the Ptolemaic revolution including the zodiac, the Ptolemaic paradigm & retrograde motion.
- Describe the Copernican revolution including the role of Galileo's observations and how these justified the Copernican paradigm.
- Define Synthesis and how this relates to paradigm shifts and science.
- Describe the anomalies of Classical Physics
- Describe the discovery of electromagnetism and why this was important.
- Describe why Einstein's theory of relativity was superior to Newton's universal gravitation.
- Describe Einstein's four great insights: equivalency of space & time, equivalency of mass & energy, universal speed limit, new concept of gravity.
- Describe how Einstein's ideas were tested including: gravitational lensing, & spacetime dilation
- Describe Einstein's legacy including: cosmic background radiation, Einstein's biggest blunder.
- Define superstition, weird beliefs and weird experiences.
- Describe Malinowski's principle and how this motivates people to believe weird things
- Describe the Peter Popoff Affair and how Malinowski's principle explains why people fell for it.

- Define contiguity and describe two types of contiguity: Spatial and Temporal
- Describe the work of E.L. Thorndike and the law of effect
- Describe the work of Edwin Guthrie and his work with contiguity
- Describe the work of B.F. Skinner and his work on superstition in the pigeon
- Describe the work of Wagner and Morris and their work on superstition in humans
- Define personal experience and describe why it is not reliable as a sole form of evidence.
- Describe how personal experience relates to perception.
- Describe errors in perception such as the shadow illusion, size constancy.
- Describe expectancy effects
- Describe the effects of vague situations on perceptions such as visual and auditory pareidolia.
- Describe common errors in judgment such as the confirmation bias and availability error.
- Define filter bubbles.
- Describe the rules for avoiding confirmation bias, availability error, and filter bubbles.
- Describe how beliefs relate to actions.
- Define beliefs, facts, and knowledge.
- Describe how reasons relate to the probability of a claim.
- Describe how to use the belief scale.
- Define commonsense skepticism and describe how to use it to evaluate claims.
- Describe how to evaluate expert opinions.
- Describe how to apply Hume's Maxim.
- Describe the ethics of proportioning belief to the evidence.
- Define subjective relativism, cultural relativism, conceptual relativism, and realism.
- Describe the difference between relativism & realism.
- Be able to apply reductio ad absurdum to relativistic arguments.
- Describe why conceptual relativism is self-refuting.
- Describe three rules for avoiding the trap of relativism.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Class Attendance is Mandatory**

- Classes will be held from 8:00 am to 9:20 am on Tuesdays & Thursdays.
- Class attendance will be recorded using the Top Hat Platform.
  - You can learn more about Top Hat attendance, clicking this link: [Top Hat Attendance](#)
  - Do not attempt to register attendance for another student, if you are caught, you and the other student will be sanctioned by the Dean of Students.
- Students are allowed 3 *unexcused* absences during the semester.
  - An *unexcused* absence is any absence that is not approved by the instructor.

- *Unexcused* absences greater than 3 can lower your final grade in this course by 1 letter grade for each additional *unexcused* absence.
- There is no set limit to the number of *excused* absences a student may have, but I reserve the right to impose a limit if I see fit.
  - An excused absence is any absence that was approved by the instructor.

## Each class you attend will earn you 1 extra credit point!

- Each time you attend a Top Hat lecture, you will earn 1 point of extra credit!
- These points are recorded as "Attendance Points" in the Top Hat gradebook and will be added to your point total at the end of the semester.

## MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

- Assignments that **can** be made up if you miss them include the following:
  - Introductory Assignments
  - Assigned Readings
  - Unit Quizzes
- Assignments that **cannot** be made up if you miss them include the following:
  - Paranormal Profiles
  - OpenMind
  - Lecture Questions
- All late assignments must be completed no later than the last day of class.

## GRADED ACTIVITIES

- Paranormal Profiles = 50 points
- Assigned Readings = 70 points
- Lecture Questions = 60 points
- OpenMind = 60 points
- Unit Quizzes = 300 points
  - Unit Quiz Bonus Points = 30 points
- Extra Credit Points for Attendance = 1 point per class
- **Course Activity Total (excluding extra credit and bonus points) = 540 points**
- **Total Possible Points > 585 points**

## GRADE CALCULATION

- A: 481 points or greater
- B: 427 - 480 points

- C: 373 - 426 points
- D: 319 - 372 points
- F: 265 points or fewer

## ASSIGNMENT TYPES

There are four types of assignments that you will encounter during this course: *Unit Quizzes, Paranormal Profiles, Reading Assignments, & Lecture Questions.*

### UNIT QUIZZES

- There are 3 unit quizzes worth a total of 330 Points (with bonus questions added).
  - There are 110 points possible on each quiz, 100 points for the main quiz questions & 10 points for the bonus question.
- Once assigned, unit quizzes will be available for 7 consecutive days.
  - e.g. made available on Thursday and remain available until midnight on the 7th day.
- Each question on a unit quiz, has 3 attempts.
  - i.e. this means you get 3 chances to get the correct answers.
- If you fail to take a unit quiz within the 7 day period, you will be given another opportunity to take the quiz at the end of the semester.
- Unit quizzes are open-book and open note so you can reference all of the course material to help you get the correct answers.
- There is no final or midterm exam.

### PARANORMAL PROFILES

- There are 2 Paranormal Profile assignments in this course: *Paranormal Profile Baseline & Paranormal Profile Followup.*
- Each Paranormal Profile is worth 25 Points each for a total of 50 Graded Points. One is given at the beginning of the semester, the other is given as the last assignment at the end of the semester.
- Paranormal Profile assignments are in a questionnaire format, there are no correct answers for each question; therefore you should select the answer that best reflects your attitude toward each question.
  - Answer each question honestly, don't be tempted to answer these questions like you think I would answer them.
  - The purpose of the Paranormal Profiles is to measure how much your exposure to the material of this course changes your position toward these questions.
  - The Paranormal Profile Baseline will be issued as your very first assignment for this course.
  - The Paranormal Profile Followup will be issued as the very last assignment for this course.

### READING ASSIGNMENTS

- There are 7 chapters (Reading Assignments) that you will be assigned during this course.
- Reading Assignments will be assigned progressively throughout the semester as we work through the course material.
- Once assigned you will have until the end of the semester to complete Reading Assignments.
- Each Reading Assignment is worth 10 points for a total of 70 points.
- Points are earned by answering the questions interspersed throughout each chapter.

## LECTURE QUESTIONS

- There are 12 sets of lecture notes that will be made available to you as the semester progresses.
- Lectures are only presented during class.
- Each set of lecture notes provides an opportunity to earn 5 points with 60 points possible by the end of the semester.
- To find out more about answering questions in Top Hat, click this link: [Answering Questions](#)

## OPENMIND

- Our class is using OpenMind as part of the course content.
- OpenMind will earn you a total of 60 points upon completion.
  - You will be assigned OpenMind during the semester.
  - The program has 8 short units for you to complete.
    - Each unit must be completed in a structured way over the course of 4 to 5 weeks.
    - You will receive specific instructions on how to complete this assignment later in the semester.
- OpenMind is a behavioral science based platform that builds scalable, evidence-based tools to equip people with the habits of heart and mind to engage in more constructive and empathetic dialogue across differing backgrounds, beliefs, and values. Because it is behavioral science based, they base their content on scientific psychological research. However, they also conduct their own research to help improve their tools and content so they can be more enjoyable and effective.
- OpenMind Research Opportunity
  - I am partnering with OpenMind to use our class as an opportunity for them to learn from us how to improve their content and effectiveness. If you are an adult age 18 or older, you are eligible to participate. Eligible participants will complete two surveys at different points across the semester. Participants will be compensated \$15 for each survey they complete. The surveys are estimated to take around 20-30 minutes each to complete.
  - Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequence. Your participation in this study will not affect your status as a student or any outcomes in this class. In fact, I will not know which of you are in the study as the data collection is conducted by OpenMind's research team.
  - Please consider being in this study. The results may give you some insights about your own personal growth and will also help OpenMind have a greater impact on people's abilities to connect with

others across differences.

## **OTHER GRADED ASSIGNMENTS**

- All students are required to read and agree to the following documents: *Social Contract, Attendance Policy, & the Grading Policy (this document)*.
- Each of these assignments has a single question located at the bottom of the document, you must answer this question with either, "I AGREE" or "I DISAGREE".
- If you answer, "I AGREE" you will earn 5 points for the social contract, 5 points for the attendance policy, and 10 points for the grading policy.
- If you answer, "I DISAGREE" or you fail to answer these questions, *you will be dropped from the course*.