

HOW BEHAVIOR WORKS (BEHV 2300)

Course Information

Primary Instructor

Chris Varnon, PhD

Email – Christopher.Varnon@UNT.edu

Office Hours – Chilton 360B. Wednesdays, 2 to 3, Thursdays 1 to 2, or by appointment.

Please contact me in person or by email for questions.

Recitation Sections

Section	Location	Time	Instructor	Contact
200	Chilton Hall 245	Tuesday 9:35AM - 10:55AM	Kelly Tait	Kelly.Tait@unt.edu
201	Environmental Science 125	Thursday 9:35AM - 10:55AM	Kaity Wyllie	KaitlynWyllie@my.unt.edu
202	Matthews Hall 312	Monday 2:20PM - 3:40PM	Kelly Tait	Kelly.Tait@unt.edu
203	Environmental Science 190	Wednesday 9:35AM - 10:55AM	Kaity Wyllie	KaitlynWyllie@my.unt.edu
204	General Academic Building 310	Thursday 5:30PM - 6:50PM	Sarah Hollingsworth	SarahHollingsworth@my.unt.edu

Course Description

This course examines behavior as part of the natural world, and provides an overview of principles describing relationships between behavior and environment. We will discuss how principles of operant, respondent, and nonassociative learning are related to experimental research, intervention techniques, and everyday life.

Course Objectives:

1. Learn key terms and concepts in behavior analysis.
2. Discriminate between and generate examples of a variety of behavioral processes.
3. Discuss the philosophical basis and broad applications of radical behaviorism.
4. Make connections between everyday events and behavior analytic concepts.

Prerequisites

None.

Required Materials

Course materials, and assignments and other information will be posted on Canvas. Check frequently for updates. Students need access to the Microsoft Suite, which is available for free for UNT students. For Canvas support, information and step-by-step instructions on

installing Microsoft Office, and other technology related issues, please see the [IT Help Desk Website](#).

Your Job as a Student

- Be willing to learn. Approach the course with an open mind. There is always much to learn from new ideas, concepts, and perspectives. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and development.
- Be prepared, present and punctual. Complete assigned work and readings prior to class and be ready to participate. Attend classes consistently and on time. Assignments must be turned in on time to receive credit.
- Dedicate time to the course. College classes are designed so that each hour spent in class should be accompanied by three hours spent outside of class. For a class that is three hours a week, expect to spend nine hours outside of class studying and working on assignments. The actual time spent outside of class will vary across students, courses, and different periods in the semester. Be ready to invest time outside of class and find a way to make your schedule work.
- Ask for help. If you struggle, ask for help in a smart way. UNT has many resources to support students—find them. Don't be satisfied with not knowing how to succeed. Ask for help but prepare yourself first. Put effort into identifying the problem so others can help you find ways to solve it.
- Complete your degree. Stay focused on your long-term goal of earning your degree. Keep track of your progress, meet with advisors regularly, and ensure you are meeting all requirements. Persevere through challenges and remember that every course and assignment bring you one step closer to achieving your educational and career goals. Data shows that a college degree provides many opportunities and is worth the cost.
- Go beyond the degree. Seek out opportunities to develop skills and experiences that extend beyond the classroom. Engage in internships, extracurricular activities, networking, and other professional development opportunities. These experiences will enrich your education and prepare you for success in your future career and life. If everyone has the same degree and experiences as you, then you are not competitive. You need to find ways to get further ahead.
- You can fail. But you can also succeed with the right efforts.

Course Assignments

Online Primer Quizzes (14 primers at 5 points each, 10.94% of class grade)

Each week you will review all online materials and take a short primer quiz prior to attending the in-person recitation section. The primers are designed to ensure you are developing an understanding of the material prior to our in-person sessions. You are not expected to be fully competent with the material at this stage. You may refer to the assigned online materials and your notes when completing the primers. You must complete the primers individually without the assistance of outside resources such as AI. You will have only once attempt to complete each primer quiz. Please prepare accordingly.

In-person Competency Quizzes (6 quizzes at 20 points each, 18.75% of class grade)

Students will complete in-person quizzes during the in-person recitation sections. These quizzes occur every two to three weeks and cover multiple units of material. While each quiz will focus primarily on the newest material, as the course content builds on previous knowledge, they should be considered comprehensive. The quizzes are closed book/notes and should be completed using the student's own knowledge.

Exams (2 exams at 100 points each, 31.25% of class grade)

Students will complete a midterm exam and a final exam. Each exam will be cumulative. The midterm exam will be given during a recitation section. The final exam will be scheduled during finals week according to UNT policy. The exams are closed book/notes and should be completed using the student's own knowledge. Prepare carefully for exams; each exam has a large impact on your grade.

Measurement Project (3 components at 100 points total, 15.63% of class grade)

Students will complete a semester-long measurement project, applying course concepts to define, measure, and analyze a real behavior in a real-world setting. The project unfolds in three stages: a behavioral definition draft, a final written project, and an individual presentation of your findings. Each stage builds directly on the one before it, so you should incorporate feedback from earlier stages before moving forward. Detailed instructions, requirements, and submission links for each stage are posted separately in Canvas.

Determinism Reflection Paper (50 points, 7.81% of class grade)

Students will complete a written reflection paper connecting course concepts to real-world understandings of behavior and personal/social responsibility. The paper focuses on determinism, the idea that behavior is shaped by environmental influences such as antecedents, consequences, learning history, and available resources, rather than relying on labels or assumed personal traits. You will respond to four guided questions addressing environmental influences and perspective-taking, personal experience, societal responses to harmful behavior, and personal reflection. Detailed instructions and submission requirements are posted separately in Canvas.

Laboratory Participation (100 points, 15.53% of class grade)

In-person recitation periods will be used for behavior analysis labs, quizzes, and the midterm exam. Attendance is required. Lab activities consist of a variety of individual or group exercise applying concepts from that week's content. Completing online materials will prepare you for the lab. If you are unable to attend due to an emergency or a conflicting academic event, please contact me as soon as possible, ideally in advance.

Grade Distribution

Assignment	Points	Percent
Online Primer Quizzes	70	10.94
In-person Competency Quizzes	120	18.75
Exams	200	31.25
Measurement Project	100	15.63
Determinism Reflection	50	17.81
Labs	100	15.63
Total	640	100

Final Grade

This class is graded out of 640 points. Students must earn at least 567 points for an A, 512 points for a B, 488 points for a C, and 384 points for a D.

Schedule Overview – Specific Assignments and Updates will be Posted on Canvas

Week	Date	Content	Assignments
1	Week of 08/17	Introduction to Behavior Analysis	Primer 1
2	Week of 08/24	Operant Conditioning	Primer 2
3	Week of 08/31	Reinforcer Effectiveness	Primer 3, Quiz 1
4	Week of 09/07	Aversive Conditioning	Primer 4
5	Week of 09/14	Shaping and Chaining	Primer 5, Quiz 2
6	Week of 09/21	Stimulus Control	Primer 6, Determinism Reflection Paper
7	Week of 09/28	Motivating Operations	Primer 7, Quiz 3
8	Week of 10/05	Midterm	Midterm Exam
9	Week of 10/12	Measurement and Design	Primer 9
10	Week of 10/19	Innate Behavior and Nonassociative Learning	Primer 10, Quiz 4
11	Week of 10/26	Classical Conditioning	Primer 11, Behavior Plan Draft
12	Week of 11/02	Schedules of Reinforcement	Primer 12, Quiz 5

13	Week of 11/09	Choice	Primer 13, Written Measurement Project
14	Week of 11/30	Verbal Behavior	Primer 14
15	Week of 11/16	Projects and Review	Quiz 6, Measurement Presentation
16	Finals Week	Final	Final Exam

Course Policies

1. Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance and participation are required to be successful in any course. Attendance will be checked during in-person recitation sections. Please be on time, late arrivals may be marked absent. If you are unable to attend in case of emergency or other academic events, please let me know as soon as possible.

2. Missed assignment policy

Late assignments will not be accepted. Make-up and exams assignments may be given at the discretion of the professor. If a make-up is permitted, it may vary in format and content from the original version of the exam or assignment. If you know you will miss an assignment or exam, please let me know immediately.

3. Electronic Devices Policy

You may use any electronic device during in-person recitation sections if it helps you with the class material. However, if I, or other students, find the device distracting, I will not allow you to use it. Please disable sounds on your devices.

4. AI Policy

Artificial intelligence software such as ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, and Grammarly can be powerful tools, but effective use requires validation from an expert. I encourage you to stay up to date with all variety of tools and software in your academic interests and careers. For this class, however, use AI software is prohibited unless explicitly stated otherwise. Use of AI tools will be considered academic dishonesty.

5. Grading

To provide you with the best feedback, grading takes time. Tests may take 1-2 weeks, and papers and other assignments may take 3 weeks.

Additional Policies and Information

Classroom Civility

Each student is encouraged to help create an environment during class that promotes learning, dignity, and mutual respect for everyone. Students who speak at inappropriate times, sleep in class, display inattention, take frequent breaks, interrupt class by coming to class late, engage in loud or distracting behaviors, use inappropriate language, are verbally abusive, display defiance or disrespect to others, or behave aggressively toward others could be asked to leave the class. Class discussion is integral to this course, and all others, and the classroom must maintain a civil and safe place for everyone to participate, ask questions, and learn the material.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Accommodation Statement

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information, refer to the [ODA website](#).

Visual Skills

Some components of this course require visual analysis skills that are core competencies in behavior analysis. These may include observing live or recorded behavior, identifying relevant features of behavior and context, and interpreting visual displays of data such as graphs. Course materials will be made accessible in accordance with university policy. When an accommodation request involves an activity where visual analysis is an essential learning objective, the instructor will work with the student and the Office of Disability Access to determine an appropriate accommodation or alternative access method that preserves the essential course objective.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please check your email for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Copyright Statement

Materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection. Materials may include, but are not limited to: documents, slides, images, audio, and video. Materials in this course web site are only for the use of students enrolled in this course, for purposes associated with this course, and may not be retained for longer than the class term. Unauthorized retention, duplication, distribution, or modification of copyrighted materials is strictly prohibited by law. For more information, visit the [UNT Policy Office](#) or [Copyright.gov](#).

Other policies can be found at policy.unt.edu.