BEHV 5330

Verbal Behavior & the Analysis of Human Behavior Credits: 03

Department of Behavior Analysis The University of North Texas

Fall, 2018

COURSE INSTRUCTORS: Daniele Ortu, PhD

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION:

Email: daniele.ortu@unt.edu Office: Chilton 393C
Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE TIME: Monday 6:00 pm to 8:50 pm (Physics 115)

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Official Course Description

The course focuses on the use of behavior analysis in understanding the nature and development of language. The course is based on BF Skinner 1957 book and explores interdisciplinary connections at the biological, neuroscientific and cultural levels.

Additional Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce a behavioral framework for the analysis of verbal behavior. Skinner (1957) defined verbal behavior as behavior that is mediated through the reinforcement provided by another individual. He provided a framework of several elementary verbal operants defined by the environmental controlling variables and reinforced via indirect action on the environment. In this course, students will learn about Skinner's analysis of verbal behavior and the controlling variables associated with each verbal operant. In addition, we will discuss and analyze multiply-controlled verbal operants and extensions of Skinner’s analysis. Students will read current research and conceptual pieces from various fields.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course has been divided into units. Each unit has specific corresponding reading objectives that will be used as guides for Interteaching discussions. The units for the course are listed at the end of the syllabus. The reading objectives will be available on the course website.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES & EVALUATION

The readings for each week will be made available by the instructor on BlackBoard. Each class will start with the instructor delivering a presentation based on the week’s readings. After the presentation, students will spend approximately one hour engaging in interteaching discussions. Students will divide into pairs to discuss the material from the readings. Students will be required to complete the Reading Objectives for the corresponding unit. Students should bring their prepared responses to class. Preparation does not necessarily entail complete essay answers to each objective. Instead, verbal prompts that enable a fluent discussion of the material qualifies as preparation for interteaching in class. Each week, students should select new partners. During the Interteaching session, students will create a brief powerpoint presentation reviewing the most important/interesting aspects of the interteaching session.

After each interteach, one or more interteach groups will be selected by the course instructor to present to the rest of the class. All other presentations will be submitted to the instructor via BlackBoard. An interteaching participation grade is based upon a combination of weekly powerpoint presentation submissions, and consistent preparedness/active contributions during time allotted to interteaching. PowerPoints will be worth 15 points each (195 total points) and presentation(s) will be worth 45 points. In summary, students can accumulate up to 240 points in the Interteaching component of the course.

Midterm Exam

Half of the class session on October 15th will be spent taking a midterm exam. Material from the beginning of the semester through October 15th will be covered on this exam. The exam will be a combination of True or False Questions, short answer questions, and two short essays (60 points).
Final Paper

Each student will prepare a paper that deals with a topic that specifically sparked interest during the course. Students are encouraged to brainstorm ideas about the final paper with the instructor throughout the course, starting early on, as the collaboration may lead to some interesting and possibly new directions. For instance, the instructor may be able to suggest exploring some non-behavior analytic literatures that are relevant. Interdisciplinary translations are encouraged. The paper could be in the form of a conceptual piece or a research proposal. There is not a page limit for the final paper, as the length will vary with respect to the extension, research proposal topic, or operant of interest.

Final papers will be evaluated as if they were undergoing review for publication in a professional, peer-reviewed journal. The final paper will be worth 100 points. Students will receive final grades based on the following mock editorial decisions: No Revisions Necessary (100 pts), Accept with Minor Revisions (90 pts), Accept with Major Revisions (75 pts), Reject with an Invitation to Resubmit (60 pts), or Reject (50 pts).

POINT SUMMARY

Interteaching = 240 total points

Powerpoint Presentations 13 @ 15 points each = 195 points

Best Presentation = 45 points

Midterm Exam = 60 points Final Paper = 100 points

Total Points Possible = 400 points GRADE EQUIVALENTS (% of 400 points earned):

A: 90% to 100% B: 80% to 89% C: 70% to 79% F: 69% or less

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. As a faculty member, I am required by law to
provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at http://www.unt.edu/oda/apply/index.html. Also, you may visit the Office of Disability Accommodation in the Sage Hall (room 167) or call them at (940) 565-4323.

POLICIES

No individual exceptions can be made to the syllabus.

Re-grades: If a student believes an error has been made in grading, a written request for reconsideration of the item(s) in question may be submitted within 1 week of receipt of the graded material. The written request should specify the item(s) in question, and the reason the student believes the answer given was correct, citing relevant sources (e.g., page number from readings on which the answer was based).

Absences: Students should arrive on time. If a student must be absent for any reason, s/he should email Dr. Ortu prior to class. Students are responsible for making their own arrangements to obtain information from any missed class period. There will be no additional make-up opportunities for missed examinations.

Student Conduct: Each student automatically certifies that any material submitted for grading is his/her own independent work. UNT policies require reporting of plagiarism or any suspected violations that constitute possible academic misconduct. Students are responsible for being familiar with the Code of Student Conduct.

Group work is encouraged; however, in the past there have been situations in which group work could have been considered cheating or plagiarism. “Legitimate” group work takes advantage of consultation with your peers, provides you with ideas, suggestions, corrections, etc., which you take into consideration in the development of your unique and individual product. Examples include reading the text and writing answers to the study guide items, then working closely with other students to compare study guide answers, and to attempt to resolve different understandings. Failing to do the reading, and memorizing answers that another student has written for the study guide is not legitimate group work; it is cheating. Drafting the assignments, then comparing specific aspects of your product to others’ is appropriate. Copying someone else’s work
products (or making your work available to another student to copy) is not legitimate; it is cheating. Always, if you are unsure about boundaries of legitimate group work, please (1) ask for clarification from the instructor, and (2) make full disclosure so that there is no question about your intentions. We are very happy to talk about these boundaries and work with you to maximize your learning and maintain individual accountability.

**Assistance:** Students are encouraged to contact the instructor (by email or during office hours) for clarifications or additional help in understanding the material. Any questions that will aid you in mastering the material are welcomed.

**Diversity Statement:** It is the policy of the University of North Texas (and this instructor) not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability (where reasonable accommodations can be made), disabled veteran status or veteran of the Vietnam era status in its educational programs, activities, admissions or employment policies. In addition to complying with federal and state equal opportunity laws and regulations, the university through its diversity policy declares harassment based on individual differences (including sexual orientation) inconsistent with its mission and educational goals. Direct questions or concerns to the equal opportunity office, (940) 565-2456, or the dean of students, (940) 565-2648. TTY access is available through Relay Texas: (800) 735-2989.

**REQUIRED TEXT, ARTICLES, AND COURSE MATERIALS**


**Unit 1: Course Introduction & Syllabus**

*August 27, 2018*

**Unit 2: Verbal Behavior: Definition and Scope**

*September 10, 2018*

Skinner, B.F. (1957). Chapters 1-2 in *Verbal Behavior*


**Unit 3: Skinner Vs. Chomsky**

*September 17, 2018*


**Unit 4: Mands – Motivation and Language**

*September 24, 2018*

Skinner (1957). Chapter 3 in *Verbal Behavior*


**Unit 4: Echoic Behavior and its Role in Building Complex Repertoires**

*October 1, 2018*

Skinner (1957). Chapter 4 in *Verbal Behavior*


**Unit 5: Tacting – Describing the World**

*October 8, 2018*


**Unit 6: Intraverbal Operants and Intraverbal Control**

*October 15, 2018*


**Unit 7: The Role of the Listener & Audience Control**

*October 22, 2018*


Skinner (1957). Chapters 6-7 in *Verbal Behavior.*


**Unit 8: Joint Control and the Importance of Covert Behavior**

*October 29, 2018*


**Unit 9: Autoclitics – What is the function of structure?**

*November 5, 2018*


**Unit 10: The Experienced Learner: RFT, Naming and Equivalence**

*November 12, 2018*


**Unit 11: What is memory to behaviorists?**

*November 19, 2018*


**Unit 12: Rule Governed Behavior and Contingency Specifying Stimuli**

*November 26, 2018*


**Unit 14: Beliefs, Attitudes, Culture & More**

*December 3, 2018,*


