

Florida Institute of Technology
PSY 3421-01 (Learning & Motivation)
Fall Semester 2004
Prepared by: Matthew Normand



Learning and Motivation

TIME: TR 5:00pm – 6:15pm
LOCATION: Psychology Room 1 (PSY 1)

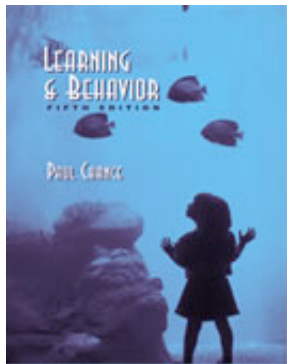
INSTRUCTOR: Matthew Normand, Ph.D., BCBA
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HOURS: M R 10:00am – 12:00pm
PHONE: (321) 674-7108
E-MAIL: mnormand@fit.edu (This is the best way to contact me)

WEB: <http://www.theskinnerbox.com/psy3421> (course)
<http://www.theskinnerbox.com> (personal)
<http://www.fit.edu/faculty/profiles/profile.html?value=236> (personal)

IMPORTANT!

This syllabus will serve as our “contract” for the upcoming semester. It explains, as clearly as possible, all of the requirements for this course. As such, it is expected that you will be familiar with this syllabus and keep it for reference throughout the semester.

REQUIRED READING



Paul Chance (2003).
Learning and Behavior (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

Many students take courses in learning without studying the experimental basis of the concepts. In my opinion, this experimental foundation is necessary to appreciate the details and complexities of animal (including human) learning as well as the elegance of the science. It is truly a natural science of the behavior of organisms and is thus different from much of the rest of psychology and the other social sciences.

As a result of this course you will be able to talk or write informatively about four general areas of a natural science of animal learning: **1)** the experimental strategies used by scientists to investigate how animals (including humans) learn, that is, how their behavior is changed by contact with the environment; **2)** the facts and resulting theories of animal learning; and **3)** the applications to human learning when relevant, and **4)** their theoretical and philosophical implications for human nature.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

You are said to "know" about a subject if you can talk accurately and informatively about it. By the end of the course you will be able to talk about the non-human scientific research on **(a)** operant and respondent conditioning and their respective applications to both human understanding (including thinking, self-awareness, problem-solving, choice, etc.) and the amelioration of a wide range of behavioral problems, **(b)** the most current theories of both, **(c)** schedules of reinforcement and their effects on the rate and patterning of behavior, **(d)** the role of species-specific behavior in learning, **(e)** stimulus control, including discrimination and generalization, **(f)** motivation, **(g)** the procedures of extinction and forgetting (memory).

ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT LEARNING

Some look at education as a two stage process: First students learn, then teachers assess that learning, usually through quizzes, exams, oral presentations, papers, etc. However if done correctly, assessment is not separate from, but rather an integral part of student learning. Each performance measure, in the form of some student behavior on exams, papers, and oral responding in class, provides another opportunity for the student to interact with the subject matter and to receive immediate feedback. If many such opportunities are provided on a weekly basis in a course, then the student gets a lot of structured practice with the material.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Study objectives: For each unit I will give you a set of study objectives that specify the material that you are to learn for the exam over that unit. The purpose of study objectives is to let you know exactly what I expect you to learn in this course each week during the semester. Rather than having to guess what is important or what you will be responsible for knowing, the study objectives spell it out. **The study objectives will be available only through the course website** (<http://www.theskinnerbox.com/psy3421>).

Quizzes: At the beginning of each unit a 5-point multiple-choice quiz will be administered. The quiz will typically be given on the first class meeting following each unit exam. The quiz will be comprised of 5 simple questions intended only to 1) provide motivation for you to have read the assigned chapter prior to class and 2) assess whether you have indeed read the material.

Exams: At the end of each unit, there will be a 25-point exam consisting of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short-answer questions. **Important: You will not be able to take the exam if you arrive after the first person finishes!**

Final Exam: A comprehensive final examination will be given during finals week. The exam will cover all of the study objectives for the semester but I will give you some helpful “tips” for studying the week prior to the exam. The date and time of the final will be announced during the semester.

Paper: A 25-point end-of-term paper is required to successfully complete this course. Per departmental policy, all students in 3000 level courses (or higher) are required to write a 3000-word term paper. The paper topic will be of your choice, though it must be directly relevant to some topic that we have covered during the semester. More details will be available on the course website. **The paper is due on December 2nd, 2004.**

REGRADES

Graded exams will (usually) be returned during the class following the exam. If you believe that the scoring was in some way inaccurate or unfair, you have **one week** to submit the exam for re-grading; exams turned in after this one-week period will not be reconsidered. Simply turn the exam back to me with a written explanation of why you believe you should not have lost points. Be sure to indicate which question(s) you want me to re-grade and why.

MISSED QUIZZES / EXAMS

I will allow you to make-up two exams over the course of the semester. As such, you get two “freebies.” It is unnecessary to inform me of either the absence or the reason for the absence in advance. A missed exam must be made-up **within 1-week of the date that it was originally given.**

However, do not waste these make-ups, as once they are gone they are gone. This means that it would be unwise to miss an exam unnecessarily because you might have a legitimate reason to miss one or more exams later. For example, just because something legitimate happens at the end of the semester doesn't mean that you get an extra make-up because you unwittingly missed one or more quizzes or exams for “less than significant” reasons earlier in the semester.

ATTENDANCE

It is expected that you will attend every class. You are responsible for anything that occurs during class, including announcements, changes of schedule, additions to or deletions from the study objectives, and so on. So, if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. You can never plead ignorance!

CANCELED CLASS

If an exam (or quiz) cannot be given either because I am sick or because classes are cancelled for any reason (e.g., hurricane, student protest, freak snowstorm blanketing the southeast), the scheduled exam will be given the day we return. If non-exam classes are canceled for any reason, the exam will still be given on the scheduled day even if there has been no lecture over the material. Under such circumstances, the exam questions will come strictly from the study objectives.

COURSE GRADE

Your course grade will be calculated based on the total points that you earn for the nine 25-point exams, the ten 5-point quizzes, the 100-point final, and the 25-point term paper. As such, the maximum number of points possible for the semester is 400. Your final grade in the course will be based entirely on the total number of points you accumulate from the quizzes, exams and term paper.

| Grade | Points | Percentage |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| A | 360-400 | 90-100 |
| B | 320-359 | 80-89 |
| C | 280-319 | 70-79 |
| D | 240-279 | 60-69 |
| F | < 240 | 0-59 |

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to adhere to the standards published in the Florida Institute of Technology Student Handbook. So, **DON'T CHEAT!** The course website has links to the University policy on cheating and plagiarism.

Tentative Course Calendar

| Week | Tuesday | Thursday | Ch |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1 08/23 – 08/27 | | What is Learning? | 1 |
| 2 08/30 – 09/03 | What is Learning * | EXAM 1 | 1 |
| 3 09/06 – 09/10 | The Science of Learning * | The Science of Learning | 2 |
| 4 09/13 – 09/17 | EXAM 2 | Pavlovian Conditioning * | 3 |
| 5 09/20 – 09/24 | Pavlovian Applications | NO CLASS | 4 |
| 6 09/27 – 10/01 | EXAM 3 | Operant Reinforcement * | 5 |
| 7 10/04 – 10/08 | Operant Reinforcement | Operant Punishment | 5/6 |
| 8 10/11 – 10/15 | EXAM 4 | NO CLASS | 6 |
| 9 10/18 – 10/22 | Operant Applications * | Operant Applications | 7 |
| 10 10/25 – 10/29 | EXAM 5 | Motivation & Stimulus Control * | 9 |
| 11 11/01 – 11/05 | Motivation & Stimulus Control | EXAM 6 | 9 |
| 12 11/08 – 11/12 | Schedules of Reinforcement * | Schedules of Reinforcement | 10 |
| 13 11/15 – 11/19 | EXAM 7 | Memory & Forgetting * | 11 |
| | 11/22 – 11/26 | Memory & Forgetting | 11 |
| 14 11/29 – 12/03 | EXAM 8 | The Limits of Learning * | 12 |
| 15 12/06 – 12/10 | The Limits of Learning | EXAM 9 | 12 |

*** Indicates quiz**

SYLLABUS ADDENDUM

Ten Steps to a Successful and Happy Semester

Study Tips

*The following tips are intended to make your study time more efficient and effective. Most learning takes place outside of the classroom and, as such, you will be expected to put in a good amount of time and effort outside of class. **At the undergraduate level, you should expect to devote 2-3 hours of study outside of class for every 1-hour spent in class.** As such, a 3-credit course would entail 6-9 hours of study per week.*

1. Read ALL assigned material BEFORE the first class during which that material will be covered.
2. Study an hour or two each and every day rather than cramming it all into one session. (I would also recommend taking at least one day a week off from studying...but not from schoolwork in general!)
3. Don't just read the chapter/article over and over again. Read it once, make flashcards (see below), and then try to outline the major points of the chapter. At that point, read the chapter/article through again. If study questions are provided, use them as a mini-exam and attempt to answer them without referring to the book or article or your notes. Review the material over those questions that you answer incorrectly.
4. Make flashcards of all key terms and practice, practice, practice. Try to recall as many correct answers as possible per minute. Also, don't study just one way. What I mean is, become fluent in providing a definition given a term AND a term given the definition.
5. If you have any questions, don't be afraid to ask me for help.

E-mail Tips

The following tips related to e-mail correspondence. Tip 5 is very important as it involves the most efficient use and proper maintenance of your e-mail accounts. Tips 1-4 are intended to insure that we have the most seamless communication possible by allowing me easy reference to the source and topic of all e-mail correspondence. Following these simple tips will enable me to better organize my inbox and respond efficiently to all matters. If you have any questions or do not understand these tips, please see me and we will have an e-mail cram session!

1. Check your e-mail at LEAST once every morning and once every evening. I will (usually) reply to any e-mail message within 24-hours of its receipt. I expect students to do the same.
2. E-mail is the BEST way to contact me. I am very bad about checking and/or returning phone messages!

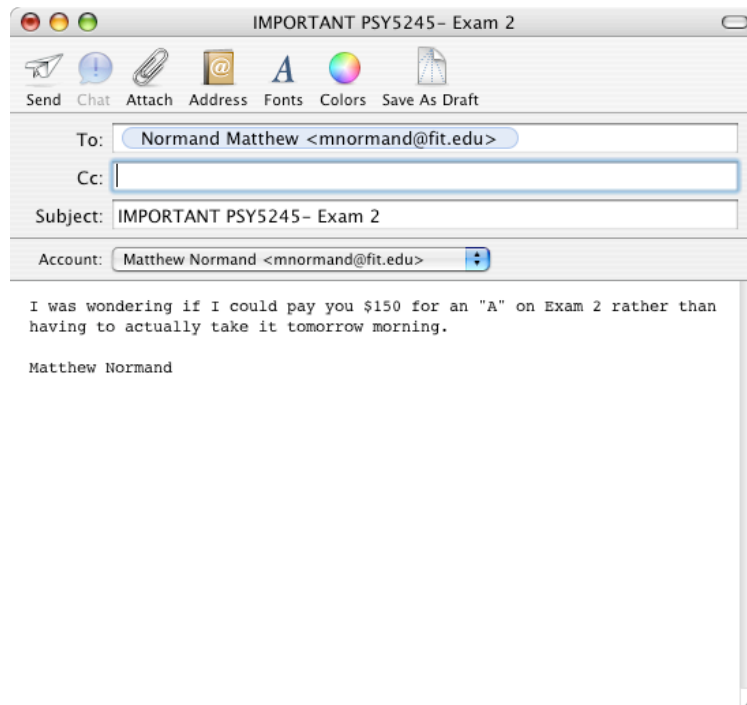
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3. If you send an e-mail, please be sure to include the following information:

Subject Line: Description of topic prefaced by course number (if it is about a course-related issue)

Salutation: Sign your e-mail with your full name.

If the e-mail you send me requires an immediate response, add "IMPORTANT" to the subject line.



4. Change your e-mail settings so that your full name (rather than just your e-mail address) appears in the "From" field of any message you send.
5. Use your fit.edu address and a mail client that downloads your messages to your computer's hard drive, rather than a web-based e-mail client like Hotmail or Yahoo. Alternatively, you can use the FL Tech web-based E-mail (<https://webaccess.fit.edu/mail/src/login.php>), as it still has plenty of storage space (provided you keep your account clean as described below) should I need to send any large file attachments to the class. Often times, web-based e-mail clients like Hotmail and Yahoo kick such attachments back as being too large.

Most e-mail programs have the option of leaving a copy of a message on the mail server or removing it. Leaving a copy on the mail server can allow you to check the same message from multiple locations. If the messages are never removed from the server, however, the amount of mail you're storing on the e-mail system can grow too large. You must keep track of how much e-mail you have stored on your mail server. If you exceed the storage space allotted to your account, you will not be able to receive any new messages (or attachments) until you reduce your stored e-mail. If you use an e-mail software program, you can set it up to download your messages to your computer, where they can be stored indefinitely. If you use a Web mail service (not recommended), you must occasionally delete some messages in your mailbox.

