

Radical Behaviorism



Florida Institute of Technology
B. F. Skinner's Radical Behaviorism (PSY5240-01)
Thursday 2:00PM– 5:45PM in PSY 1
Prepared by: Matthew Normand

Instructor

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Office Hours

M W 10 AM – 11 AM
but best by appointment
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I. Course Description

This course covers B.F. Skinner's seminal articles on radical behaviorism along with commentaries by many notable scientists and Skinner's responses to those commentaries. Articles by some of Skinner's students and colleagues also are covered. Topics include determinism, private events, contingency-shaped versus rule-governed behavior, and a radical behaviorist perspective on culture and society.

II. Required Readings

This course has two required books and one required journal article. The Catania and Harnard text (hereafter C&H) is available for purchase through the School of Psychology for \$33.00. Most of you should already own B. F. Skinner's *Science and Human Behavior* (hereafter S&HB). I will provide copies of Skinner's article "Why I am Not a Cognitive Psychologist."

Catania, A. C., & Harnard, S. (Eds.) (1988). *The Selection of Behavior. The Operant Behaviorism of B. F. Skinner: Comments and Consequences*. Cambridge University Press.

Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and Human Behavior*. New York: The Free Press.

Skinner, B. F. (1978). Why I am Not a Cognitive Psychologist. *Behaviorism*, 5, 1-10.

We will cover each of Skinner's articles in C&H but we will read only selected commentaries for each. Please check the "Assignments" section of the Blackboard™ course website (<http://fit.blackboard.com>) for the assigned commentaries for each article.

Additionally, I will provide study objectives for each of Skinner's articles (but not the commentaries to the articles) in the "Course Documents" section of the Blackboard™ course website at <http://fit.blackboard.com>.

III. Course Requirements

This course will be conducted as a graduate seminar consisting of group discussions led by the instructor. Because of this arrangement, attendance and participation will count for 35% of your final grade. There will be several short quizzes given throughout the semester and a comprehensive final administered during the last class period. However, the primary focus of the semester will be the development of a scholarly reaction paper to Skinner's article "Why I am Not a Cognitive Psychologist."

You can track your progress throughout the semester via the “Gradebook” feature of our Blackboard™ course website at <http://fit.blackboard.com>.

a. Attendance and Participation (70-points)

You can earn a maximum of 5 attendance points and 5 participation points per class meeting (excluding the final meeting). One attendance point will be deducted for each minute that you arrive late or leave early from class. Participation will be a more subjective matter to be determined by the instructor on a class-by-class basis.

b. Quizzes (30-points)

Three 10-point quizzes will be administered throughout the semester, each comprised of short-answer, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions.

c. Final Exam (50-points)

A 50-point final exam will be administered during the last class period of the semester. The exam will consist of short answer, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions spanning the range of topics addressed throughout the semester.

d. Paper (50-points)

A 3-5 page APA-style paper is required in reaction to “Why I am Not a Cognitive Psychologist.” Your paper should follow the format set forth by the comments in C&H. You may choose to respond to the paper in its entirety (i.e., the general theme of the paper) or you may respond to a specific aspect of the paper. Your analysis/reaction should be original and not simply a paraphrase of someone else’s response to similar topics. At least three outside sources must be cited in your paper.

An outline of your paper (i.e., thesis statement with proposed supporting material) along with a potential reference list is **due via E-mail prior to class on January 27th**.

A draft of your paper is **due via E-mail prior to class on February 10th**.

Your final paper, incorporating any changes suggested in response to your draft, is **due via E-mail prior to class on February 24th**.

IV. Course Schedule

Unit	Date	Reading Assignment	Assessment	Paper
1	01-13-04	Private Events		
2	01-20-04	Selection by Consequences	Quiz 1	
3	01-27-04	Methods and Theories in EAB		Outline Due
4	02-03-04	The Operational Analysis of Psy. Terms	Quiz 2	
5	02-10-04	An Operant Analysis of Problem Solving		Draft Due
6	02-17-04	Behaviorism at Fifty	Quiz 3	
7	02-24-04	The Phylogeny and Ontogeny of Behavior	Final Exam	Paper Due