



Psychology of Learning - 375 (Sec. 1)

Dr. M. Plonsky - Fall, 2016 (Last update 9/5/16).

Class meets Tuesdays & Thursdays from 12:35-1:50 p.m. in Sci-D224.

Please bookmark this Syllabus page, print it, & use it as a reference throughout the semester. While it may be modified, you will be notified if it is through announcements in class and/or email.

Contents & Resources

Course Description - [goals](#), [book](#), [attendance \(& notes\)](#), [grading](#), [expectations](#), [additional issues](#), [contact info](#).

Tentative Class Schedule

Grade Postings ([Grading Code Collection Form](#) - please fill out during the first week of class).

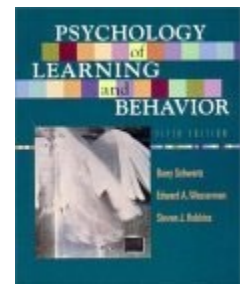
Course Description

A. GOALS

The goal of the course will be to gain an understanding of how the environment affects behavior. A scientific perspective will be emphasized, as well principles that apply across species. In fact, the emphasis will be on pervasive and basic forms of learning that are a normal, though typically unnoticed, part of living.

B. BOOK

The required text (available in the college bookstore) is: Schwartz, B., Wasserman, E. A., & Robins, S. J. (2002). *Psychology of Learning and Behavior* (5-th ed.). NY: Norton.



C. ATTENDANCE

According to the university [Attendance Policy](#), you are to "Attend all your classes regularly". While I do not formally take attendance, it is unlikely that you will do well in the course if your attendance is poor. There are at least two reasons for this. The first is due to the fact that the exams include some material only presented during class sessions. Second, I believe that in class discussion of the material is necessary to gain the level of understanding of the material required.

If you miss a class, it will be to your benefit to find out what occurred during that class from a classmate. Most of the *text* for multimedia slides used in lecture are available below in a format that can be read by most word processors. I recommend bringing these to class (in whatever format you find most useful).

| 1-st Quarter | 2-nd Quarter | 3-rd Quarter | 4-th Quarter |
|--|---|---|---|
| <u>Introduction</u> <u>Elicited behavior</u> | <u>Classical</u> <u>Conditioning</u> | <u>Operant</u> <u>Conditioning</u> | <u>Learned Helplessness</u> <u>Schedules</u> <u>Summary</u> |
| An <u>Study Guide</u> for the book, which includes a more detailed description of what to concentrate on in the readings, is also available. | | | |

D. GRADING POLICY

- Four exams will be given. Each will consist of 50 multiple choice questions. Each question will consist of from 3-5 choices. No questions will contain a choice such as, "*all of the above*", "*none of the above*", or "*two of the above*", etc. Each exam will *mainly* cover material since the previous exam. I use the word "*mainly*" because the material on a specific exam may depend on understanding something covered earlier in the course, in which case the earlier material is fair game as well. Furthermore, there are often themes/perspectives in the course that repeat throughout the semester that may be tested on.
- Your grade is primarily determined by the average of these 4 exam scores. There is no provision for "*extra projects*" to improve grades. However, I **MAY** increase your grade beyond that which is indicated by the arithmetic average of your test scores for any of the following three reasons:
 1. Class participation.
 2. Improvement over the semester.
 3. One test score that is significantly lower than the other three.
- You will be responsible for **both** the assigned readings **and** the lecture material. Many students dislike the reading. I am sorry if you do. Nevertheless, I must prepare you to learn independently. Reading about the material in all its detail is a necessary skill in this regard. Those students who do not take the reading seriously do not do as well as they would like to in the course. My goal for the exams is for about 80% to cover the overlap between lecture and reading, 10% just from reading, and 10% just from the lecture.
- I will post exam scores [on the web](#) a couple of days after each of the exams for students who [give me a code](#) to do so as well as provide you with a conservative estimate of your *overall* performance in the course after each exam. By the way, until I post the grades for the first exam, you will be able to see the grades I gave the last time I taught this course at the [grade posting](#) link.
- Bring a couple of Number 2 pencils for the exams. If you are wearing a hat with a brim, I will ask you to turn it around or take it off when taking exams. Music players (e.g., ipods, cellphones) are not allowed during exams.
- Cheating on an exam will lead to an automatic failure of that exam and possibly other penalties. For more details see the document entitled, "[Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures](#)" (a PDF file). For a simple and less technical read, try this document on [Academic Integrity](#).

- Failure to show up for an exam results in failure of that exam. If you must miss an exam, let me know **BEFORE** the exam takes place or written documentation of the emergency will be required. Furthermore, if you miss more than one exam written documentation is required.
- If you wish to reschedule an exam, send me an email no more than one week prior to the occurrence of the exam. I will then send you an email with the times that the psychology department has available for make-up exams (typically there are 3 times available each week). Your reply to my email with your choice of a date & time will then serve as my reminder to give the proctor your exam. You are allowed to reschedule an exam in this manner one time in a given semester before written documentation is required. Note that if your cumulative grade in the class is less than a 'B-', I do not recommend postponing an exam. Lastly, a makeup exam must be taken prior to the occurrence of the exam that follows. In other words, if you miss the second exam, you must make it up before you take the third exam.
- Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are coordinated through the [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) on campus. Please be sure to take care of these arrangements well ahead of time.
- Concerning withdrawing from a class, it must be done in a timely manner in accordance with UWSP's [published deadlines](#). Failure to do so could result in a failing grade or the loss of reimbursable tuition fees.

E. EXPECTATIONS

What I expect from you:

1. To agree to study this syllabus carefully (ASAP) & refer to it when questions arise about the class.
2. To acknowledge that effort, by itself, is not enough to justify a worthy grade. In other words, you are graded primarily on the *merit of your performance* in the class rather than the *amount of effort* you put into the class.
3. To acknowledge that previous academic preparation (e.g., biology, math, etc.) matters. Those who are better prepared are likely to do better in the class.
4. To attend class & give your full attention to the material, as well as conduct yourself in an appropriate manner (e.g., not having personal conversations during lectures or performing other activities that disrupt the class). As noted earlier, I believe class discussion to be a necessary ingredient for the class to accomplish its goals. Thus, if class participation is not forthcoming, I will call on people at random.
5. To meet the obligations of the course (e.g., reading, assignments, etc.) and not make excuses for your failure to do so.
6. To treat everyone in class, including the professor, with respect.
7. To check your university email account several times each week. I will make announcements via this medium.
8. To not plagiarize or otherwise steal the work of others.
9. To understand & adhere to your [Rights and Responsibilities](#) as a UWSP student.
10. To turn off or silence cell phones when in class.

What you can expect from me:

1. To manage the class in a professional manner. This may include educating you in appropriate classroom behavior. While I am quite tolerant of inattentiveness, I am not at all tolerant of disruptive behaviors. For example, while I will tolerate sleeping in class, I will not tolerate snoring.
2. To prepare carefully for each class & begin & end it on time.
3. To try to learn your name (if class size permits) & to recognize your individuality & treat you with respect, as well as to be honest with you. I apologize in advance for being bad with remembering names.
4. To treat all students equally. Thus, I will not discriminate on the basis of your identity, appearance, gender, race, creed, color, viewpoints, disability, whether I like you or not, or anything else.
5. To have 3 office hours each week during which you are welcome to stop by (no appointment necessary). See [contact info](#) for more detail.
6. To give grades primarily based on the quality of your work.
7. To return your grades quickly (with your permission) & with detailed feedback. For example, I will provide you with an overall estimate of your grade prior to the 10th week of the semester drop deadline. In addition, students wishing to go over their exams with me individually, are welcome to come by during my office hours.
8. To be honest about what I know. If I do not know something, I will say so (and then I will probably look it up).
9. To treat any plagiarism, cheating, or other violations of academic integrity harshly.
10. To silence my cell phone when in class.

F. ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Use of Electronic Devices

Audio recording of what goes on in class is permitted only with my explicit permission. I do not permit any video recording, however, you can take pictures of slides I present to the class. You may not distribute any audio recordings or images of slides. In other words, what is presented in this classroom should not be presented anywhere else. Keep in mind that if these rules are broken, there can be legal consequences.

International students are admitted to UWSP with the understanding and documentation that they have the English-language proficiency necessary to be successful in our courses. Since I realize that language can still be an issue, I will permit hard copy dictionary use during exams for these students. Note however, that use of electronic translation devices will not be permitted.

Emergency Procedures

- In the event of a **Medical Emergency**, call 911 or use one of the red emergency phones located around the campus. Offer assistance if trained and willing to do so. Guide emergency responders to the victim.
- In the event of a **Tornado Warning**, proceed to the basement of the building. Avoid wide-span rooms.
- In the event of a **Fire Alarm**, evacuate the building in a calm manner. Notify instructor or emergency command personnel of any missing individuals.
- In the event of an **Active Shooter**, "*Run/Escape, Hide, Fight.*" If trapped hide, lock doors, turn off lights, spread out and remain quiet. Call 9-1-1 when it is safe to do so. Follow instructions of emergency responders.
- See [UWSP Emergency Management](#) plan for additional details.

Title IX Legislation

Due to Title IX legislation (federal law), if any disclosure of unreported neglect or abuse of a child, elder, or disabled individual is made to a University instructor, he or she is required to report such information to the appropriate administrative or law enforcement officials. This includes instances of sexual harassment/assault of an adult, bias and hate crimes, etc.

G. CONTACT INFORMATION

My office is located in Science B-341. I will have office hours Tuesdays 3-4:00 p.m., Wednesdays 1-2:00 p.m., and Thursdays 2-3:00 p.m. (or you can arrange to see me by appointment at some other mutually convenient time). **Note that my office hours do NOT require an appointment.** If my door is closed, please knock. You can see a visual of my [schedule here](#). You can reach me at 346-3961 (and please leave a message if I am not available) or through electronic mail at mplonsky@uwsp.edu. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

When sending me an email, please following the directions below carefully. It will ensure a more timely and relevant response from me. I typically reply within 1-2 business days.

1. **Use the "Subject:" line.** It should summarize the point of the email in a couple of words.
2. **Tell me which class is involved.** I typically teach 3 classes & have about 100-250 students each semester.
3. **Write professionally.** In other words, use whole words and sentences, unlike texting where you might use the minimal amount of letters you can get away with. A worthy website regarding this issue is [Netiquette](#) by C. Pirillo.

Tentative Class Schedule

Barring illness on my part or other such unforeseen emergencies, we will stick with this schedule. If changes are necessary they will be announced in class and via email.

| WK | DATE | LECTURE TOPIC | READINGS |
|-----------------|----------|---|--------------------|
| 1 | 9/6-8 | Orientation | |
| 2 | 9/13-15 | Introduction | C. 1 |
| 3 | 9/20-22 | " | |
| 4 | 9/27-29 | Relevant issues | |
| 5 | 10/4 | Elicited Behavior | C. 2, pps. 121-129 |
| 10/6-Th | | EXAM 1 | |
| 6 | 10/11-13 | Elicited Behavior (con't) | C. 3-4 |
| 7 | 10/18-20 | Classical Conditioning | C. 5 |
| 8 | 10/25-27 | " | C. 6 |
| 9 | 11/1 | " | |
| 11/3-Th | | EXAM 2 | |
| 10 | 11/8-10 | Operant Conditioning | C. 7-8 |
| 11 | 11/15-17 | " | |
| 12 | 11/22 | Aversive Control | C. 9 |
| | 11/24 | -- Thanksgiving Break -- | |
| 11/29-Tu | | EXAM 3 | |
| 13 | 12/1 | Learned Helplessness | pps. 174-177 |
| 14 | 12/6-8 | Schedules | C. 10 |
| 15 | 12/13-15 | Summary | pps. 160-162 |
| | 12/21-We | EXAM 4 (12:30-1:30 p.m.). NOTE: The exam is only 1 hour, rather than from 12:30-2:30 p.m. as indicated in the timetable. | |



Comments? mplonsky@uwsp.edu.