Course Description and Objectives

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the clinical research arm of behavior analysis, a natural science of behavior that rests on the philosophy of science known as behaviorism. ABA can be divided into several areas: methodology, intervention strategies, conceptual issues, specific areas of application, and professional issues. In this seminar, we will gain an understanding of topics in each of these areas through a directed consideration of:
1. The nature and defining features of applied behavior analysis;
2. Research methods used in applied settings (e.g., measurement, experimental design and treatment evaluation, data analysis);
3. Concepts, principles, and procedures that comprise behavioral interventions; and
4. Distinct areas of applied research (e.g., organizational behavior management, health and fitness, behavioral education, etc.) that exemplify how concepts and principles have been applied to produce meaningful change in various topic areas.

I have deliberately avoided autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and functional assessment of behavior problems as specific topic areas, but much of the introductory material on defining features, concepts, methods, etc. will touch upon them. Along the way, we will also consider professional issues in ABA and its development as both a science and a practice. I will presume that entering students are familiar with basic principles of operant conditioning and at least some of their applications; thus, the course will not be an "introduction to behavior modification."

Course Material

There is no text, but most of the background readings will come from the following:


The chapters we will use from these books will be posted in the class Canvas site. All other readings, listed below per class session, will be also available on the class Canvas website. The readings comprise a mix of review chapters, seminal papers on selected topics in ABA, and recent applications in each area.
Class Format & Assignments

Most class sessions will be divided roughly into the following three segments:

1. Quiz: The first segment is a brief quiz over study objectives I deliver to you, usually 4 days in advance. Each quiz will consist of 1-2 questions that you can answer in a brief paragraph (2-3 sentences). I will post a study/discussion guide (20-25 questions) for the first two units on the class Canvas website. Thereafter, the guides will be developed as described below.

2. Lecture/Class Activity: After each quiz, I will either (a) give a 30-60 lecture that provides overview/supplementary information related to the topics, or (b) lead you in individual or group activities designed to promote interaction with the material from multiple perspectives.

3. Research/conceptual article presentations: The third segment is devoted to student-led discussion of a research or discussion article related to that week’s topic. Each paper in the syllabus for that week will be assigned to a specific student. The assigned student will give a 15-20 minute PowerPoint presentation. The nature of the presentation will vary depending on whether it is a research paper or a discussion/conceptual paper. The content is described below along with how I will score these presentations.

Research paper presentation

A. Brief Summary – 8 points (2 for appropriate coverage of each of the 4 sections below):
   • Rationale - What prior study or concept made this study necessary; convey to the class what gap(s) in the literature was being addressed; what is the experimental question?
   • Method - Description of participants and settings and anything that made them relevant; the independent and dependent variable(s); briefly describe procedures.
   • Results & Discussion - Describe the data for each participant or group as relevant (e.g. representative outcomes); summarize the answer to the experimental question and how it fits with prior research. Identify study limitations beyond what the authors identified.
   • Extension - How would you extend this study? You can rely on the author’s discussion of future directions if you must—sometimes the extension is so obvious that it is hard to conceive anything of anything else. Still, I would much rather you come up with something novel. Either way, briefly sketch out how you would carry out that study.

B. Expansion – 6 points: Provide your audience with some understanding beyond the pages of your assigned paper. Feel free to draw from unassigned readings, data from studies that illustrate your points, survey the class to generate data, etc. Be as creative as you like.

C. Discussion questions – 6 points: Present the class with at least three discussion questions—these can be drawn from the study questions you submitted. We will address your questions as a group. All other students are expected to thoroughly read the articles and be prepared to discuss the paper, answer your questions, and pose new questions. You should, of course, be prepared to answer your own questions. Your discussion questions (and your expansion) do not have to come at the end of your presentation; they can be embedded at any point, but please identify it as such.

Discussion/Conceptual paper presentation

A. Brief Summary – 8 points:
   • Summary of the thesis; what is being considered.
   • Message: A summary of at least 3 three take-home points from the paper (you can include more than three), and any subordinate points that led you to your conclusions.

B. Expansion – 6 points: See above.

C. Discussion questions – 6 points: See above.
Study/Discussion Questions

Beginning on the fourth session of class (Feb 7), I will continue to provide study/discussion questions for the first (background) reading, but I will turn over the remaining questions to you. Each student will submit 5 questions to me, based on the paper assigned to you, no later than Sunday, 4:00 pm. Your discussion questions should be of the sort that you would ask if you were teaching this course and (a) wanted to make sure that your students were grasping the main points of the reading or (b) wanted to start a class discussion that would expand students’ grasp of the material. You will receive points for the adequacy of these questions.

Submit your questions to me in a format that specifies only the page number (if there is a specific passage or page to which your question pertains) followed by the question. If your question does not pertain to a specific passage or page, please preface your question with “XX.”

The resulting email to me should look something like this (except there would be five questions):

To: Iser DeLeon  
Subject: Larson et al. (2013)

200: Participants in this study were fairly young (3-years-old). What are some positive and negative aspects of arranging environments to increase MVPA in very young children?

XX: In several passages, the authors mention that while numerous studies examine the functions of problem behavior, few have assessed the function of appropriate behavior. What are some possible reasons for why research in this area is lacking?

Do not:
- Place a “p.” in front of the page number
- Number or place bullet points in front of your questions
- Send more questions than requested unless you feel VERY strongly about it
- Send your questions in an attached document (it should be in the body of the email)

Once I’ve received all the questions, I will compile them and sometimes add some questions of my own. I will then post the final list on Canvas. Every student should be prepared to provide, during class, their response to every question on the final list. One or two of these will be the question(s) on the daily quiz and at least three will form the basis for discussion during student presentations.

Final Exam

Your final exam will be a take-home exam. It will consist of 4-5 questions that will require you to synthesize information across units. You will have at least one week to prepare your answers, which will require roughly 8-10 double spaced pages.
### Grading

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Tests</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (13 x 3 pts)</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation (3 x 20 pts)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-91.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions (3 x 5 pts)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Participation</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>82-87.9%</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-81.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Possible Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>164</strong></td>
<td></td>
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### University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office ([http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

### University Policy on Academic Misconduct

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php).
Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments

Unit I: Principles, Processes & Procedures in Applied Behavior Analysis

January 10: Introduction & Overview

- Syllabus review
- Discussion of course topics & overall objectives

January 24: Defining Applied Behavior Analysis


January 31: Observation, Measurement, & Experimental Design


February 7: Reinforcement in Applied Contexts

February 14: Punishment in Applied Contexts


February 21: Extinction in Applied Contexts


February 28: Stimulus Control, Generalization, & Maintenance


Unit II: Promoting Behavior Change in Varied Contexts

March 14: Organizational Behavior Management


**March 21: Food and Nutrition**


**March 28: Health and Fitness**


**April 4: Sports Performance**


**April 11: Behavior Analysis and Treatment of Drug Addiction**


**April 18: Environmental Preservation**


**April 25: Schools & Education**


**Finals Week**: Final Exams due by the end date/time of the scheduled final exam.