General Information
Instructor: Brian Iwata, 329 Psy Bldg., 377-6045 (home) or 214.5383 (cell), e-mail: iwata@ufl.edu
Class meetings: Mondays, 5-8 pm, Psy 129
Office hours: By appointment (call or email me)

Course Content
Experimental psychopathology (EP) involves the use of experimental methods to study abnormal behavior, and contemporary approaches to assessment in applied behavior analysis nicely illustrate the general EP model. These approaches have a similar focus: They attempt to identify the determinants (functional characteristics) of a particular response and collectively have been called “functional behavioral assessment” or “FBA” (IDEA, 1997). In this seminar, we will examine three general methodologies subsumed under FBA: (a) functional (experimental) analysis, (b) descriptive (naturalistic) assessment, and (c) the indirect (anecdotal) method. After becoming acquainted with the defining characteristics, variations, strengths, and weaknesses of each approach, we will examine research in which functional analyses were either evaluated or used for diagnostic or prescriptive purposes.

Objectives
As a result of completing this seminar, students will be able to:
1. Describe the general field of experimental psychopathology, including its historical basis, general themes, and methodologies.
2. Describe the common learned functions of problem behavior.
4. Describe the distinctive features, strengths, and limitations of experimental, descriptive, and indirect approaches to behavioral assessment.
5. Describe the logic of test-control methodology in identifying determinants of problem behavior.
6. Describe the most common limiting conditions of experimental approaches to assessment and procedural variations that have been developed to address them.
7. Discuss ethical issues surrounding the use of experimental approaches to assessment.
8. Describe fundamental, reinforcement-based approaches to behavior reduction and why their application requires knowledge of behavioral function.
9. Propose specific treatment strategies for common functions of problem behavior involving (a) elimination of establishing operations, (b) extinction, and (c) response replacement.
10. Develop a research proposal that extends current knowledge about functional analysis methodology.

Readings
The literature on FBA has grown to almost 2000 articles and chapters over the past 35 years. In an attempt to expose you to as much information as possible yet promote in-depth discussion, I’ve adopted a two-tier list of readings. Primary readings (3-5), for which everyone is responsible, are assigned for each class period (see schedule). Supplementary readings are optional. Reading assignments will be posted on the website about a week ahead of time and will be drawn from two sources.
• Most articles will be from JABA, which is readily available to all of you online at the JABA website.
• Articles and chapters from other sources will be posted on the website.
Format

• Seminar: I will provide a lecture to introduce or supplement material contained in the readings. The remainder of class time will be spent discussing the assigned readings (see assignments). I will lead class discussion the first few weeks; thereafter, one of you will lead the discussion for the article you were assigned (see next item), and everyone is expected to participate in the discussion of all of the primary readings.

• Oral summaries: If assigned an oral summary for an article or chapter, you will lead a discussion by summarizing main points of the reading, interesting details, and strengths and limitations. Part of the summary will be to pose questions for consideration by the group.

• Critiques: You will submit four critiques for one of the primary readings (your choice of readings, although it would be nice to submit one early in the term and then spread them out as you wish). Each critique will be 2-pages (1-in margins, double spaced). Do not write the complete article listing on your paper; just your name and the names of the authors (e.g., Iwata - Forsythe & Zvolenski, 2002). Your critique should briefly summarize the reading in one brief paragraph. I know what is in the readings, so the purpose of the summary is for you to convey key points in a few sentences. In the main part of the critique, you should identify notable strengths and weaknesses, and suggest at least one new topic for future research. Critiques should be emailed to me by midnight the day before class.

• Research proposals: You will submit a research proposal (see due date on the schedule) focusing on one or more aspects of assessment or treatment. The proposal should be a 5-page (1-in margins, double spaced, except for references) “protocol,” which will include:
  • Statement of problem and purpose with citations to key literature (1 page)
  • Method section specifying essential procedures (2 pages)
  • Brief discussion of anticipated findings and implications (1 page)
  • Reference list

Each proposal will be presented orally and will be discussed during class.

Class attendance and assignments

You are expected to attend all classes in order to participate in discussions. Assignments are to be emailed to me directly at times noted above. If you are absent for a class, your make up assignment will be to submit written critiques for all readings assigned for that class within one week. If you will miss several classes due to illness, family emergency, etc., please contact me, and we will develop a reasonable accommodation.

Grading

• Oral summaries will be graded on a 5-pt scale (3 for completeness, 2 for questions posed).

• Written critiques will be graded on a 10-pt scale (8 for content, 2 for style). Please see the “editorial” file on the course website for hints on reading, writing, and grading. I urge you to purchase a text on writing style, such as Troyka. About one in every 10 graduate students knows how to write, which means you likely are not one of them. It will be impossible to improve your writing simply by encountering consequences.

• Proposals will be graded on a 20-pt scale (16 for content, 4 for style).

• Final grades will be based on in-class participation (33%), critiques (33%), and proposals (33%).
University policies (taken from UF guidelines)

• Accommodation for students with disabilities: Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (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.

• 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.

• Absences due to illness or observance of religious holidays should be communicated to the instructor. Requirements for class attendance, make up exams, assignments, and other work in this class are consistent with university policies that can be found at http://handbook.aa.ufl.edu/policies.aspx
1.8 Class Introduction and Details

1.15 No class, MLK Day

1.22 Historical Framework and General Overview

1.29 Experimental Analysis: Review and Basic Methods

2.5 Design Variations I: The Brief Functional Analysis and Screening Procedures

2.12 Design Variations II: Latency, Trial-Based, and Precursor Analyses

2.19 Design Variations III: Variations in Antecedent and Consequent Events

2.26 Resolving Ambiguous Findings, “Synthesized” Assessment

3.5 No class, Spring break

3.12 Descriptive Assessment

3.19 Indirect (Anecdotal) Methods

3.26 Intervention Strategies

4.2 Problem Behavior Maintained by Social Sr+ Protocols due

4.9 Problem Behavior Maintained by Social Sr- Protocols 1-3

4.16 Problem Behavior Maintained by Automatic Reinforcement Protocols 4-6

4.23 Ethical Issues, Summary Protocols 7-8