Overview

Students are expected to have extensive background in applied behavior analysis prior to enrollment. Applied behavior analysis has had considerable influence in the field of developmental and intellectual disabilities. The proliferation of behavioral methods and principles in this realm has led to restructuring of our legal, residential, and educational systems as they relate to individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. This seminar has three general goals: 1. To familiarize students with various developmental disorders/diagnoses, 2. To familiarize students with contemporary (and sometimes controversial) issues in developmental and intellectual disabilities, and 3. To familiarize the students with classic and recent behavioral research or discussion papers in developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Disorders

Although behavior analysts typically do not develop or implement assessments and interventions based on diagnostic criteria, one goal of this seminar is to become familiar with various developmental disorders and diagnoses. There are at least two reasons for this: 1. Many behavior analysts currently are or eventually will be working in settings where it will be critical (or at least beneficial) to understand terminology and diagnostic criteria related to developmental disorders, and 2. There may be subtle aspects of particular disorders that can be addressed by behavioral techniques either in terms of prevention or intervention. Each week, one student will be asked to give a brief overview of a particular developmental disorder. The presenter should provide at least four learning objectives. The presentation should address, at a minimum, the following: 1. The defining characteristics of the disorder, 2. The etiology of the disorder (if known), 3. Special considerations for behavior analysts, 4. Suggested areas for behavior analytic research. The actual presentation content should be about 15-20 minutes, given that group questions and discussion usually adds on about another 10-15 minutes.

Contemporary and/or Controversial Issues

Behavior analysts working in developmental disabilities will encounter a range of issues that are not addressed directly in classic or even recent studies. In addition, behavior analysts will need to be familiar with laws, fads, accepted best practice and procedures, as they relate to developmental and intellectual disabilities in community, residential, and school settings. Each week one student will be asked to present background information.
on a particular topic or issue and then guide the discussion (again, a total of about 30 minutes). The overview should include at a minimum: 1. At least four learning objectives, 2. A summary of the issue, 3. The history of the issue, 4. Reasons this issue might affect behavior analysts, and 5. Suggested areas for behavior analytic research.

**Behavioral studies**

Thousands of behavioral studies have been published related to assessment and intervention in developmental and intellectual disabilities. Many of those papers are considered highly influential in the field. There is no way to cover all of this material and accomplish the other goals of this seminar. Thus, we will focus on usually one study per week. Even though we will have a discussion leader (see below), everyone is expected to participate in the discussion. Each article will be discussed for approximately 30 minutes, including a 10-minute overview and 20-minute group discussion. The overview should include at least four learning objectives, a very (very) brief summary of the article (because we have all read it), a statement about the potential or actual contribution of the article/study, and a summary of 1-2 strengths and limitations.

**Reading quiz**

There will be a brief quiz over the reading each week. This is to make sure everyone keeps up with the reading. The quizzes are worth 2 points and you can drop one score.

**Exams**

There will be two exams, one at about mid-term and one at the end of the semester. These will both be worth 20 points.

**Participation**

Students will be expected to participate in the discussion with high quality questions and comments. Depth and quality of participation will be viewed more favorably than high frequency, low quality participation. Although this category is necessarily subjective, students are encouraged to check in with the instructor frequently for feedback and some feedback will be given throughout the semester if the instructor believes a problem exists.

**Assignments**

In-class assignments will relate to critiquing conference presentations attended or selected publications that arrive in print after the construction of this syllabus. The specific nature of the critiques will be discussed in class, but will generally involve a summary, discussion of strengths and limitations of the presentation/article, and ideas for future research.
Grading

The course grade will be based on six factors: 1. Reading quizzes (20); 2. Presentation grade average (20); 3. Exam 1 (20); 4. Exam 2 (20); 5. Overall quality of participation (10), and 6. In-class assignments (10). A=93%, A-=90%, B+ = 87%, B=83%, B-=80%, etc.

Readings

The readings will be made available on line or on canvas. * indicates the same presenter should cover both the contemporary issue and the reading for that week because they are related.

Schedule

August 28: Planning and organization

September 4: Disorder: Rett Syndrome
Contemporary issue: Legal and ethical issues relating to the written FBA and BIP
Reading: Vollmer et al. (2011). ABAI position statement

September 11: In class assignment, to be discussed.

September 18: Disorder: MR/DD/DD (historical use of terminology)
Contemporary issue: What is an IEP? Why do we need to know?
Reading: Azrin & Foxx (1971). Classic Toilet Training Study

September 25: Disorder: Autism
Contemporary issue: Early and Intensive Behavioral Intervention*
Reading: Lovaas (1987)* EIBI

October 2: Disorder: Smith-Magenis Syndrome
Contemporary issue: Early Start Denver Model*
Reading: Dawson et al (2010)* ESDM

October 9: Disorder: Down Syndrome
Contemporary issue: VB-MAPP/ABLLS
Reading: Dass et al. (2018). VB study

October 16: Exam 1
October 23: Disorder: Prader-Willi  
Contemporary issue: Social Stories*  
Reading: Chan & O’Reilly (2010)* Social Stories Study

October 30: Disorder: Prader-Willi  
Contemporary issues: Facilitated communication*  
Reading: Montee et al. (1995)* FC debunking study

November 6: Disorder: Lesch-Nyhan  
Contemporary issue: Judge Rotenberg Center controversy  
Reading: Linscheid et al. (1990) SIBIS punishment study

Nov 13: Disorder: PKU  
Contemporary issue: Sensory Integrative Therapy (and weighted vest)  

Nov 20: In class assignment, to be discussed

Nov 27: Disorder: Williams Syndrome  
Contemporary issue: Adjudication and competency  
Reading: Vollmer et al (2011, book chapter on sex offenders is I/DD)

December 4: Exam 2