

EAB 6099: Survey of Behavior Analysis, Fall 2025

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Office hours: TBD

Time/Location: Tuesdays, 1:55-4:55pm, 191 Psychology Building

Course Textbook: Rasmussen, E. B., Clay, C. J., Pierce, W. D., & Cheney, C. D. (2023). *Behavior analysis and learning: A biobehavioral approach (7th ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Course Description: How do contingencies affect behavior? This question broadly forms the basis of this class because contingencies between environmental events (classical conditioning) and between behavior and environmental events (operant conditioning) largely comprise what we call the *principles of behavior*. Although the answers are not usually simple nor are they complete, understanding behavioral principles is very important to behavioral researchers and clinicians. Contingencies provide essential tools for understanding and undertaking behavior change. To understand how contingencies affect behavior, we will explore experimental and theoretical approaches to studying basic principles, including predictiveness, reinforcement, punishment, stimulus control, etc. In doing so, this course primarily examines how basic research on behavioral processes contributes to our tentative understanding of behavior ranging from reflexes to verbal behavior. Understanding behavioral processes underlying contingencies will equip you to better implement and design methods both to study and change behavior. By the end of the course, you should understand the fundamentals of operant and respondent behavior, appreciate how basic research in the laboratory contributes to this understanding, and begin to apply this understanding to your experimental and clinical interests.

Course Overview: The course will include **readings and guides** to help with understanding those readings. First, classes will begin by selecting a new partner each week and initiating a **5-min discussion** to discuss any questions or areas of interest you had on the readings and guide. Second, a multiple-choice **quiz** will assess comprehension of the primary readings, followed by a discussion of the quiz items. Third, we will spend approximately one hour clarifying concepts in discussion format from the primary reading. Finally, I will provide an interactive lecture. You will be assessed on completion of reading guides, quiz performance, class participation, and a final presentation.

Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, you should be able to engage effectively in the following behaviors from discussions, readings, and lectures:

- Identify how behavior analysis differs from other approaches to understanding behavior
- Describe how fundamental research on reflexes and classical conditioning provide insight into the relation between learning and biological processes
- Describe how fundamental research on operant conditioning reveals how behavior is a function of its consequences
- Identify how schedules of reinforcement influence the rate, pattern, and persistence of operant behavior
- Describe the different types of aversive control and its importance for survival and the variables influencing its effectiveness

- Evaluate how stimulus-stimulus contingencies can augment or interfere with the production of operant behavior
- Explain how relatively simple stimulus control contributes to the development of complex discriminations
- Describe how choice is fundamental to understanding operant behavior generally and underlies many socially relevant problem behaviors
- Identify approaches to examining conditioned reinforcement and at least two ways to conceptualize its effects
- Explain social learning and rules are established and control behavior from a behavioral perspective
- Identify how verbal behavior differs from traditional notions of language and how equivalence relations have been used to examine it
- Describe how selection processes are used to understand the evolution of species, operant behavior, and cultural practices

Attendance Policies: Please note this is a weekly class so missing one class results in missing a lot of material and course performance generally is positively related to attendance. For all attendance rules, we will follow the university attendance policies at the link below. If you are unable to attend class, be sure to collect notes for any missed classes from a peer. Students must take/submit all assignments at scheduled times, unless you have formal documentation of a university-approved excuse (e.g., university-sanctioned event, illness). If you know you must miss a class beforehand with a university-approved excuse, contact me as early and as soon as possible and send me formal documentation. Traffic problems and trouble finding parking are not legitimate excuses so please ensure you arrive on time. For any approved absences, you will need to hand in all assignments on time or ahead of time.

Assignments

Reading Guides: 25% of grade. Reading Guides provide (1) a set of questions for all required readings within Files through Canvas and (2) the opportunity to ask questions and (3) the opportunity to research one of your questions for each reading. Completing these guides while reading will assist you in applying and evaluating concepts from the readings more effectively than would a passive read. As with any course material, engaging actively with the material in as many ways as possible (e.g., flash cards, testing) leads to better learning. Reading guides will be checked for completion, as well as relevance and thoroughness of your answer. Answers should be paraphrased and, therefore, should NOT be identical other students', online resources, or the readings. Identical or incomplete answers will not be counted. A Word file in Files provides a template for your answers -- please only number your answers and DO NOT include the question before your answers.

If any answers would benefit from making an image of any kind (e.g., graph), either draw these by hand to take a picture or use graphing software – embed any graphs within the text of your document. Please submit your completed guides to Canvas as a Microsoft Word file by the specified date/time. Late submissions also should be submitted via Canvas but will be penalized 10% per day but complete submissions after 5 days can earn up to 50% until the last day of classes of the semester. It is your responsibility to ensure the file(s) you upload to Canvas saved properly (e.g., refreshing the screen, opening uploaded file(s), take screen shot).

In addition, you are asked to come up with at least one question for each reading. These questions can help you prepare to participate in class and, therefore, should be substantive. In other words, they should ask more than for simple clarification of something that can easily be confirmed on your own. They can stem from either your own reading or from questions from the reading guide. For at least one question per reading, you also will **conduct some further research to provide an answer to your question** by examining the relevant literature using a database (e.g., Google Scholar, Web of Science) and writing 3-5 sentences to summarize your findings. Some examples here might be to identify additional research findings or provide alternative explanations from those described in readings.

Quizzes: 25% of grade. Weekly quizzes based on the current Reading Guide will begin approximately 5 minutes after class begins. You are welcome to discuss/study with others in the time before the quiz begins. You will have 15 min to take quizzes. Quizzes will have 10 multiple-choice questions. **Please bring a laptop or tablet to every class so you can take quizzes using Canvas.** You will not be permitted to have any window open on your laptop/tablet other than the quiz. You will need to install and use [Lockdown Browser](#) when taking quizzes (see introductory [video](#)). Your lowest quiz score will be dropped, with the exception of any unexcused absences/tardiness, which will result in a zero score for that quiz. Excused absences will result in that quiz not being counted toward your overall quiz grade.

Class Participation: 25% of grade. All students are expected to participate actively in discussions during each class. Active participation involves remaining attentive and engaged throughout classes. This includes posing and answering questions during class discussion by engaging in prompted and unprompted discussion with the instructor and other students. In addition, using electronic devices is discouraged but is welcome during frequent breaks. I recommend taking notes by hand on paper rather than on a computer or tablet. Active engagement with course materials before class facilitates active engagement during class. The questions you develop within Reading Guides, and the subset you answer, can provide you with ideas for interacting during class. Plan to participate regularly throughout every class period. Receiving credit for class participation includes filling out the weekly **Participation Survey** in Canvas following the class meeting. Unexcused absences not meeting university guidelines will result in a zero for the class-participation grade for that week.

A wise person once said, “If you are afraid to look foolish, then you sacrifice knowledge for pride.” Graduate school is the place where it is important to practice public speaking about complex ideas. After graduate school, you will be required to talk a lot in your profession. If you choose now to practice speaking in your classes, your ability to speak fluently about complex concepts with others will improve – a process that will allow you to avoid looking foolish in front of your future colleagues, students, or clients.

Presentation: 25% of grade. Presentations should be approximately 15 min in duration and based on a [thesis statement](#). The thesis statement is your main argument you will support, ideally with research. In other words, your presentation should convey a single idea that is novel, clear, and concisely described relating to any topic we discussed during the course. Presentations should make explicit links to the behavioral processes revealed in the empirical literature contacted in the readings. Ideas should be of high quality and empirically driven to emphasize the usefulness of understanding behavioral processes. The idea might be to propose a novel experiment, application,

insight, treatment strategy, or other interesting suggestion inspired by the behavioral processes discussed in the readings or class (not philosophical). This also should not be an idea developed for another requirement (e.g., thesis). All claims must be justified empirically. If you absolutely must speculate or conjecture about something, provide evidence as to why you think what you do. Grading will be based on quality of your rationale, and the strength, clarity, and organization of arguments during the presentation (see grading rubric in Files). I ask that you submit a thesis statement for your presentation, which will comprise 10% of your Presentation grade. For the presentation, you will present to the class during finals week. Policy for late submissions is the same as for Reading Guides.

Essentially, **your thesis statement is a statement of your main argument** and what you want listeners to conclude. Devote the entire presentation to providing supporting evidence for your thesis statement. Be sure to support your thesis statement with your strongest argument (s). It is better to strengthen and refine one great argument than superficially list several arguments. Thus, the idea is to practice developing quality arguments with the idea that all presentations (and writing) should reflect that level of consideration and refinement. Do not spend the entire presentation asking questions – the purpose of the presentation is to support your thesis based on evidence. Provide enough information from peer-reviewed sources for appropriate context, rather than exhaustively reviewing of all aspects of the relevant research.

Relatedly, **it is important to understand and present to your [audience](#)**. I will be grading all of your presentations; however, please do not omit relevant information because you assume I already understand the background to your argument. It is very possible that I am not familiar with the particular study, design, procedure, or arguments necessary to make a point clearly. These presentations are to assess your understanding of the material and ability to convey that understanding. Therefore, please present to a generally educated audience and be sure to explain your ideas/evidence sufficiently so your peers could easily understand your presentation.

You want to provide sufficient rationale for novel ideas beyond ‘it would be interesting’ or ‘it would add greater understanding.’ Important ideas, such as novel arguments or studies, need to be introduced within the context of the literature, not simply because they are possible. Similarly, critiques of major points and conclusions should not be limited to single statements, such as simply suggesting that “more research is needed.” Brief criticisms are acceptable for minor points but ideas central to your thesis statement need to be developed fully. When developing this support, you should contact and cite the most relevant literature. Omitting the most relevant literature to your thesis statement omits the most important reasons for presenting your argument. You should use a database (e.g., Google Scholar, Web of Science) to find relevant research. You might find the required and supplemental readings good starting points when developing and expanding your topic. When presenting ideas, it is helpful to clarify what are your original ideas versus summaries of ideas you found in the literature – take credit for your good ideas.

Feel free to give and receive feedback from your peers and anyone else who is willing. Practice giving and receiving feedback is the best way to improve your overall comfort and effectiveness when presenting. When commenting on others’ presentations, merely indicating places in which you get confused is a big help. Do not expect all of your or your peers’ comments to be substantive, as it is likely neither of you are experts in the topic.

Grades:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
A	93%+
A-	90-92.9%
B+	87-89.9%
B	83-86.9%
B-	80-82.9%

Course Schedule: Please note there is some chance I might modify the schedule and/or readings but I will let you know ahead of time. Any changes will be announced via Canvas. If a class is canceled (e.g., due to inclement weather), be prepared to cover the missed material and quiz during the next scheduled class meeting.

Week	Date	Topic	Required Readings
1	26-Aug	Introduction	Syllabus; Mace & Critchfield (2010); Schlinger (2018)
2	2-Sep	Science of Behavior, EAB, Selection	Ch 1, 2 (pp. 37-49; 62-70), 14; Skinner (1981)
3	9-Sep	Reflexes and Classical Conditioning	Ch 3; Rescorla (1988)
4	16-Sep	Reinforcement and Extinction	Ch 4; Neuringer & Jensen (2013); Wathen & Podlesnik (2018)
5	23-Sep	Schedules of Reinforcement	Ch 5; Baum (2021)
6	30-Sep	Aversive Control of Behavior	Ch 6; Fontes & Shahan (2021)
7	7-Oct	Operant-Classical Interrelations	Ch 7; Baum (2012)
8	14-Oct	Stimulus Control	Ch 8; Zentall et al. (2013)
9	21-Oct	Choice and Preference	Ch 9 (pp. 311-332, 344-354); Cowie & Davison (2020)
10	28-Oct	Behavioral Economics	Ch 9 (pp. 332-344); Hursh et al. (2013)
11	4-Nov	Conditioned Reinforcement	Ch 10; Shahan (2010)
	11-Nov	Veterans Day	Thesis statement due
12	18-Nov	Correspondence Relations	Ch 11; Hackenberg & Joker (1994)
	25-Nov	Thanksgiving Break	
13	2-Dec	Verbal Behavior	Ch 12; Urcuioli (2013)
	9-Dec	Final Presentations	

Academic Policies and Resources: <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

This link accesses a webpage providing information on:

- Attendance and make-up policies
- DRC information
- Assigning grade points
- Gator Evals
- Honesty policy
- In-class recording
- Academic and wellness resources

Course Policy on Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI): In addition to the University's Honesty Policy regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc., use of AI to complete all or portions of your work is considered unauthorized aid in this course and will be considered academic dishonesty. Submitting assignments

implies you agree to the following statement: *I certify the submitted work is my own, with all sources correctly attributed and that I did not use artificial intelligence (AI) in its development or completion.*

Harassment: Sexual Harassment (and any other type of harassment) is not tolerated in this class, in the Department of Psychology, or at the University of Florida. Sexual harassment includes: the inappropriate introduction of sexual activities or comments in a situation where sex would otherwise be irrelevant. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and a violation of state and federal laws as well as of the policies and regulations of the university. All UF employees and students must adhere to UF's sexual harassment policy which can be found here:

<https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/>

Please review this policy and contact a university official if you have any questions about the policy. As mandatory reporters, university employees (e.g., administrators, managers, supervisors, faculty, teaching assistants, staff) are required to report knowledge of sexual harassment to UF's Title IX coordinator. For more information about UF's Title IX office see: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/> You can also complete a Sexual Harassment Report online (Title IX) at: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/title-ix-reporting-form/>