

**Grand Valley State University**  
**Psy 310: Behavior Modification**  
**MWF 9:00-9:50AM**

**Instructor:** Amanda Karsten, PhD, BCBA-D (she, her)

**Email:** [karsteam@gvsu.edu](mailto:karsteam@gvsu.edu)

**Phone:** 616-331-2388

**Meeting location:** 2302 Au Sable Hall

**Office location:** 2139 Au Sable Hall

**Office hours:** Wednesdays and Fridays 10:00-11:00AM and by appointment (Zoom or F2F)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Students will study the application of learning principles, techniques, and procedures to the understanding and treatment of human psychological problems in a wide range of settings.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Differentiate between various principles of operant conditioning, including but not limited to reinforcement, punishment, extinction, shaping, chaining, and verbal and rule-governed behavior.
2. Evaluate a behavior modification program and use the theoretical principles to understand, modify, and shape programs to modify behavior in a variety of settings and service organizations.
3. Describe behavioral problems and the underlying principles used to explain such aberrant behavior, as well as possible consequences of maladaptive behavior.

### **REQUIRED MATERIALS** *(delivered through GVSU SAVE, unless you opt out before deadline)*

Miltenberger, R. (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Behavior Modification: Principles and Procedures.

Note: The 5<sup>th</sup> edition is acceptable, however the chapter numbers may not match.

Supplemental readings and videos will be posted on our Blackboard page.

### **COURSE LOGISTICS**

#### **What do I need to know about my instructor?**

It is the goal of your instructor to foster a learning environment that is welcoming, fair, and productive for each individual student. Toward this goal, students can expect the instructor to:

- Prepare for class and enthusiastically facilitate activities
- Answer your questions and help you solve any problems you may experience
- Model effective teaching practices and professional conduct
- Provide thoughtful feedback on your assignments, discussion, and exam performance
- Check GVSU email daily (Monday-Friday) and respond to email within 48 hours
- Maintain the Blackboard page with accurate, accessible information and promptly address any errors or problems that a student brings to my attention

### **What do I need to know about this course and the science of learning?**

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is a behavioral science with a strong conceptual and empirical foundation that is used in a variety of settings to make a socially significant impact on people's lives. In the early portion of this course, we will focus on terminology and core principles that are necessary to understand ABA solutions discussed in the second half of the class. This course is a bit like what you might experience in an introductory class in healthcare, law, or engineering; an understanding of terms and concepts prepares you to apply those concepts. Mastering the basics can be the most difficult part of launching into a new field, but it is worth it if you want to understand more about how the science of learning can help to achieve meaningful change at the individual and societal level.

You might notice that what you learn in this course actually goes beyond just learning a field of study. When you understand more about why humans do what we do, it may cause a shift in your perspective and actions across multiple contexts (i.e. work, school, home, and community). Challenge yourself to take what you are learning beyond the classroom, to see how the principles of behavior change are everywhere, and to see how considering those principles can have practical value for you, for your community, and for your future endeavors.

### **Blackboard is the Course Management System**

To access Blackboard, go to <https://mybb.gvsu.edu/> and enter your network login and password.

This course utilizes Blackboard, GVSU's online course management system. Take a look at the GVSU Online Learning pages to find numerous materials about using Blackboard and online learning <http://www.gvsu.edu/online/>.

Use of Blackboard is integral to this course and students must log on a few times each week in order to complete course requirements, receive important announcements and updates, and communicate with instructors and other students about course content.

Check the current [technical requirements](#) to use Blackboard and [preferred browser information](#).

### **Technical difficulties with Blackboard**

If you experience technical problems with Blackboard, contact the help desk by email or phone - [helpdesk@gvsu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@gvsu.edu) or 616-331-3513. The help website is <http://www.gvsu.edu/it/learn/>

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you are in need of accommodations due to a learning, physical, or other disability you must present a memo to me from Disability Support Resources (DSR), indicating the existence of a disability and the suggested reasonable accommodations. If you have not already done so, please contact the [Disability Support Resources](#) office (4015 JHZ) by calling 331-2490 or email

to dsrgvsu@gvsu.edu. Please note that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received a copy of the DSR issued memo. All discussions will remain confidential.

### **COURSE ORGANIZATION and ASSIGNMENTS**

*The learning activities for this course take a few different forms, but the instructor has scheduled each activity in a predictable rhythm within each unit. Please contact the instructor early in the semester if you have questions about expectations for the course or how to establish a work pattern that fits both our course calendar and your unique schedule and responsibilities.*

#### **Class Meetings** (two times per week, covering a new unit every 2 weeks)

This course is organized into 2-week learning units with the early meetings of each unit focusing on key points from your readings and the later meetings focusing on applications of those key points. I will post reading assignments, course content presentations, supplemental activities, and assignments for each 2-week unit on Blackboard, and unit activities (e.g., assignments) will generally be due before the end of the two-week period. All previously completed units will be open on Blackboard throughout the course so you can refer back to them at any time.

#### **Readings** (weekly)

Participating actively in class meetings will be helpful but not sufficient for you to achieve our course objectives and earn a satisfying grade. You will have ~1-3 short book chapters to read each week and occasional article readings that will be posted on Blackboard. **You will maximize your learning in this course if you can at least skim the assigned readings PRIOR to class on the dates indicated on our course schedule which appears in the final pages of this syllabus.** I will post reading objectives to help guide your reading and your self-checks of key understandings. Readings were selected to help you prepare for deeper discussion and application exercises in class. My goal is for readings and in-class activities to jointly support you as you discover how the content of this course connects to your goals beyond the course.

#### **Quizzes** (bi-weekly)

You will complete one graded practice quiz toward the end of each unit on Blackboard. Worth 5 points each, these practice quizzes give you the opportunity to answer ~5 multiple choice and ~2 short essay questions that may appear on your exam. We will discuss common error patterns and clarify key concepts during the next class period. Quiz points are awarded based on your honest effort to complete the quiz, not based on whether you submit perfect answers.

I will also present reading quiz questions during class most weeks. Reading quiz questions will tend to be easier than the questions on the course exams; however, they do provide a quick check-in for you to assess your current understanding of assigned text or article readings.

#### **In-Class Activities** – (~5 per semester)

Graded in-class activities will vary in type and length, but all will give you the opportunity to apply course content in collaboration with your classmates and instructor. In-class activities – both the graded activities listed on your course schedule and the less formal, ungraded discussion activities in each class meeting – will constitute an important part of your learning

within the course. Descriptions of graded in-class activities will be posted in the relevant learning unit on Blackboard within ~1 day of the scheduled activity. Students who cannot attend a scheduled in-class activity may submit their independent, written work for full credit along with their unit reflection by the posted deadline.

**Unit Reflections** – (~5 per semester)

You will independently create one personal reflection toward the end of most units, and you will have the option to submit in written or ~5-min audio-recorded format. All reflections should be carefully planned and executed (i.e., clear; complete) to demonstrate your current understanding of course content as well as your personal reaction to what you are learning. We will dedicate a portion of class time to sharing reactions and discoveries after you submit your work. More information about each reflection will be provided in the relevant learning unit on Blackboard.

**Exams** – (4 proctored exams)

You will have four exams scheduled throughout the semester; the first three exams will focus on the two most recent units (~4 weeks of course content) and the fourth exam is a cumulative final that will incorporate questions from each prior unit. The exams will include ~20 multiple choice or fill-in questions (1 point each) and ~2 short essay questions (5 points each).

**POINTS AND GRADING**

Assignment	Points	Total Points for Semester
Practice quizzes (6)	5 points each	30
In-Class Activities (5)	5 points each	25
Unit Reflections (5)	10 points each	50
Exams (4)	30 points each	120
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>		<b>225</b>

**Grading Scale**

Letter Grade	Percentage Range
A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	70-76%

D	61-69%
F	0-60%

## COURSE POLICIES

### **Masks and Distancing:**

Per guidance from the GVSU Virus Action Team, fall semester is starting at alert level 0 and masking on campus is optional. You are welcome but not required to wear a mask during my class and/or to socially distance by leaving empty seats where space allows. I encourage all students to follow our policy for symptomatic illness or exposure (below). Doing what we can to keep our community healthy is a top priority, and alert levels may shift during the semester. I thank you in advance for your partnership and flexibility.

### **Symptomatic Illness or COVID Exposure:**

Please do not come to class if you are ill with a fever, GI issues, etc. or have a known exposure to someone with COVID. Instead, follow the class procedures for an absence. If I am feeling sick, I will take the same approach and come up with alternative meeting arrangements or materials that make sense for everyone's health and learning opportunities.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is strongly encouraged but not required for this course. Students who are not able to participate in a specific meeting for non-emergency, personal reasons should review materials posted on Blackboard (e.g., posted reading/quiz questions, powerpoint slides) as well as reach out to classmates and the instructor with any specific questions about the missed content. Please notify your instructor of any **foreseeable** scheduling conflicts within the first week of class.

In the event of an unavoidable absence from a graded in-class activity or exam (e.g., illness, family emergency, weather-related disruption), students will have the opportunity to reschedule as soon as practical but ideally within 2 business days. The instructor will make reasonable accommodations for any unavoidable, recurring absences (e.g., short-term loss of transportation). Please notify your instructor via email at your earliest convenience so she can help you to make a workable alternative plan.

### **Makeup/Late Work Policy**

Students may submit late assignments for 50% credit within 1 week of the posted deadline. Please notify your instructor if you are aware of circumstances that could affect your timely completion of assigned work in this course.

### **Religious Observances**

Your instructor is dedicated to maintaining the rights of students to observe religious holidays. If you need to miss a class to observe a religious holiday, please contact your instructor a week in advance to discuss any arrangements.

### **Student Support**

GVSU and your instructors are dedicated to helping you meet your academic and career goals. Please do not hesitate to contact your instructors if you wish to discuss your course performance or other academic issues. Additionally, if you would like to talk to a professional counselor about mental health concerns, phone the GVSU Counseling Center during normal business hours at 616-331-3266. If you are experiencing a crisis or are considering suicide you can call 1-800-273-TALK at any time.

In addition to professional resources listed above, please consider scheduling an appointment with a mentor through Psych Friends if you feel you could use some extra help/guidance/support in any academic domain or for your well-being. Psych Friends mentors are upper-level undergraduate peer mentors who are trained to provide support in many areas including: effective study and time management techniques, exam preparation and reflection skills, comprehension of the psychology and behavioral neuroscience major requirements, tips for engaging in the field, strategies for education continuation, methods for maintaining physical and mental health. Schedule an appointment here: <https://www.gvsu.edu/navigate> and Questions? Email [psychfriends@gvsu.edu](mailto:psychfriends@gvsu.edu)

[GVSU Student Code regarding Integrity of Scholarship and Grades:](#)

**Section 223.00: Integrity of Scholarships and Grades**

Truth and Honesty. The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles, and in so doing protect the validity of University grades. This means that all academic work will be done by the student to whom it is assigned without unauthorized aid of any kind. Instructors, for their part, will exercise care in the planning and supervision of academic work, so that honest effort will be positively encouraged.

**Section 223.01: Plagiarism**

Any ideas or material taken from another source for either written or oral presentation must be fully acknowledged. Offering the work of someone else as one's own is plagiarism. The language or ideas taken from another may range from isolated formulas, sentences, or paragraphs to entire articles copied from books, periodicals, speeches or the writings of other students. The offering of materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment also is considered plagiarism. Any student who fails to give credit in written or oral work for the ideas or materials that have been taken from another is guilty of plagiarism.

"This course is subject to GVSU's general requirements for courses. A full list with pointers to resources may be found at [www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies](http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies)."

**\*Psy 310: Behavior Modification**

Session Dates	Meeting Dates	Readings	Deadlines
<b>Unit 1</b>			
Intro to Circumstances View of Behavior			
<b>Week 1</b> 8/29		Course Welcome	
8/31		Ch. 1	Introductory Survey due 9/1 at 11:59PM
9/2		Ch. 24 (pp. 487-492; 498-505)	
<b>Week 2</b> 9/5	Happy Labor Day (No Class)		
9/7		Ch. 24, cont'd	
9/9		Unit 1 In-Class Activity <i>Circumstances v. Traits</i>	Quiz 1 due 9/11 at 11:59PM
<b>Unit 2</b>			
Defining and Measuring Meaningful Changes in Behavior			
<b>Week 3</b> 9/12		Ch. 2	Reflection 1 due 9/13 at 11:59PM
9/14		Normand (2009)	
9/16		Normand cont'd	
<b>Week 4</b> 9/19		Ch. 3	
9/21		FC Video & Slides	
9/23		Unit 2 In-Class Activity <i>Define &amp; Measure Behavior</i>	Quiz 2 due 9/25 at 11:59PM
<b>Week 5</b> 9/26			Reflection 2 due 9/27 at 11:59PM
9/28		Trending Now & Review	

9/30			<b>Exam 1</b>
<b>Unit 3</b> Why We Do What We Do, Part 1: Procedures that Strengthen or Establish Behavior			
<b>Week 6</b> 10/3		Ch. 4	
10/5		Ch. 4, cont'd	
10/7		Ch. 9	
<b>Week 7</b> 10/10		Ch. 9, cont'd	
10/12		Ch. 11 (pp. 202-204; 215-220)	
10/14		Unit 3 In-Class Activity <i>Shaping v. Chaining</i>	Quiz 3 due 10/16 at 11:59PM
<b>Unit 4</b> Why We Do What We Do, Part 2: Procedures that Weaken or Eliminate Behavior			
<b>Week 8</b> 10/17		Ch. 13	Reflection 3 due 10/18 at 11:59PM
10/19		Ch. 15 (pp. 297-313) Ch. 16 (pp. 327-337)	
10/21		Trending Now & Review	Quiz 4 due 10/25 at 11:59PM
<b>Week 9</b> 10/24-10/26	<b>Happy Fall Break, No Class</b>		
10/28			<b>Exam 2</b>
<b>Unit 5</b> Why We Do What We Do, Part 3: Language, Rules, and the "World within the Skin"			
<b>Week 10</b> 10/31		Ch. 25 (pp. 509-519) Harris (2009)	
11/2		Ch. 25 (pp. 520-523)	
11/4		Unit 5 In-Class Activity <i>Procrastinating in College (P1)</i>	
<b>Week 11</b> 11/7		Ch. 23	
11/9		Ch. 23, cont'd	
11/11		Unit 5 In-Class Activity <i>Procrastinating in College (P2)</i>	Quiz 5 due 1/13 at 11:59PM
<b>Unit 6</b> Application Spotlight, Part 1: Addictions, Autism			
<b>Week 12</b> 11/14		Dougherty et al. (2014)	Reflection 5 due 11/15 at 11:59PM
11/16		Bowen et al. (2014)	
11/18		Autism Videos & Slides	

<b>Week 13</b> 11/21		Karsten & Mann (2020)	Mini-Quiz 6 due 11/27 at 11:59PM
11/23-11/25	<b>Happy Thanksgiving Break, No Class</b>		
<b>Week 14</b> 11/28		Devita-Raeburn (2016)	
11/30		Trending Now & Review	
12/2			<b>Exam 3</b>
<b>Unit 7</b> Application Spotlight, Part 2: Student-Nominated Topics			
<b>Week 15</b> 12/5		Article 1 (TBD by 11/21)	
12/7		Article 2 (TBD by 11/21)	
12/9		Course Wrap-Up and Final Review	Final Reflection due 12/14 at 11:59PM
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>Final Exam – Wednesday, 12/14, 8-9:50AM</b>		<b>Cumulative Final</b>

*\* I reserve the right to modify this syllabus and course schedule based on student progress or extenuating circumstances related to COVID, severe weather, etc.*