

Grand Valley State University
Psy 310-05: Behavior Modification
MWF 11:00-11:50PM

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

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Meeting location: 2302 Au Sable Hall

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Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 12-1:00PM 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. (7th edition). Behavior Modification: Principles and Procedures.

Note: 6th edition or hard copy similar in content, however, cited page 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 natural science with a strong conceptual and empirical foundation that is used in a variety of settings to make a socially significant impact on peoples' lives. In the early portion of this course, we will focus on terminology and core principles that are necessary to understand ABA solutions discussed later in the semester. 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 goes beyond just learning a field of study. When you understand more about environmental influences over what we do, it may cause a shift in your perspective and actions across multiple contexts (i.e. work, school, home). 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://lms.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 [supported browsers](#).

Technical difficulties with Blackboard

If you experience technical problems with Blackboard, contact the help desk by email or phone - 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 Student Accessibility Resources (SAR), indicating the existence of a disability and suggested reasonable accommodations. If you have not already done so, please contact the [Student Accessibility Resources](#) office (215 Blue Connection) by calling 331-2490 or emailing access@gvsu.edu. Please see me with questions or concerns about this process.

COURSE ORGANIZATION and ASSIGNMENTS

Please contact me 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 (three 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, slides, supplemental activities, and assignments for each 2-week unit on Blackboard. All previously completed units will be open on Blackboard throughout the course so that 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 ~1-2 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 at the end of this syllabus.** I will post objectives to help guide your reading and your self-assessment of key understandings. Readings were selected to help you prepare for deeper discussion and application exercises in class. My intention is for readings and in-class activities to jointly support you as you discover how the content relates to your goals within and beyond this 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 ~8 multiple choice and ~2 short essay questions related to the unit objectives. We will discuss common error patterns and clarify key concepts during the class period after quizzes are due. Quiz points are awarded based on your current best effort to answer each question, not based on whether you submit perfect answers.

I will also present quiz questions during class most weeks using the polling website menti.com. Menti questions will sometimes reflect the types of questions you can expect on exams, while other Menti questions help me assess your progress with tough concepts or learn more about your current opinions on a topic we are discussing in class.

In-Class Activities – (~5 per semester)

Graded in-class activities will vary in format, but each activity 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 important learning opportunities within this course. Descriptions of graded in-class activities will be posted in the relevant 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. All reflections should be carefully prepared to demonstrate your own 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 unit folder 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 of content (~4-5 weeks of class) and the fourth exam is a cumulative final that will incorporate questions from each prior unit. Exams 1-3 each consist of ~12 multiple choice (1 point each), ~4 fill-ins (2.5 points each), and 1 short essay question (8 points). The cumulative final consists of 20 multiple choice questions (1.5 point each).

POINTS AND GRADING

Assignment	Points	Total Points for Semester
Practice quizzes (6)	5 points each	30
In-Class Activities (4)	5 points each	20
Unit Reflections (4)	10 points each	40
Unit 7 Assignment	20 points	20
Exams (4)	30 points each	120
TOTAL POINTS		230

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

Symptomatic Illness:

Please do not come to class if you are ill with a fever, stomach issues, etc. or have had close exposure to someone with contagious illness. 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.

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., 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 me of any **foreseeable, recurring** 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. I will make reasonable accommodations for any unavoidable absences (e.g., short-term loss of transportation). Please notify me 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 me if you are aware of circumstances that could affect your timely completion of assigned work in this course.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Many faculty and students are exploring the ways that ChatGPT and other AI resources can facilitate their learning and communication. Early in the semester, I will communicate guidelines for appropriate uses of AI in each type of activity via parameters in the [AI Assessment Scale](#) (Perkins, Furze, Roe, & McVaugh, 2024). I welcome you develop your repertoire for ethical use of AI in my course, including the possibility of meeting with the Writing Center to learn more about best practices for leveraging AI in the development of your original work products. If you utilize ChatGPT for an assignment that you submit in my class, please follow [guidance from the American Psychological Association](#) for citing information from AI sources and provide an AI disclosure with the following format: I acknowledge the use of *[insert AI system(s) and link]* to *[specific use of generative artificial intelligence]*. The prompts used include *[list of prompts]*. The output from these prompts was used to *[explain use]*.

Religious Observances

I am dedicated to supporting the rights of students to observe religious holidays. If you need to miss a class to observe a religious holiday, please contact me a week in advance to discuss any arrangements.

Student Support

GVSU faculty and staff are committed to helping you meet your academic and career goals. Please do not hesitate to contact me 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 or call / text 988 for support 24 hours a day.

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> Questions? Email 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."

*Psy 310: Behavior Modification

Session Dates		Readings	Deadlines
Unit 1			
Intro to Circumstances View of Behavior			
Week 1 8/25	Course Welcome		
8/27	310 Summit: People-Centered Classroom		Introductory Survey due 8/28 at 11:59PM
8/29	What is the science of learning?	Ch. 1	
Week 2 9/1	No Class – Happy Labor Day		
9/3	Case Example: ABA for Fears and Phobias	Ch. 24 (pp. 358-369)	
9/5		Unit 1 In-Class Activity <i>Circumstances v. Traits</i>	Quiz 1 due at 11:59PM
Unit 2			
Defining and Measuring Meaningful Changes in Behavior			
Week 3 9/8	How can we measure behavior?	Ch. 2	
9/10			
9/12	What is scientific skepticism in ABA?	Normand (2009)	Unit Reflection due at 11:59PM
Week 4 9/15	How can we monitor intervention effects?	Ch. 3 (pp. 30-41)	
9/17	What is pseudoscience?	FC Video & Slides	
9/19		Unit 2 In-Class Activity <i>Define & Measure Behavior</i>	Quiz 2 due at 11:59PM Deadline to drop course with 75% tuition refund
Week 5 9/22		FC Slides, cont'd	Unit Reflection due at 11:59PM
9/24		Trending Now & Review	
9/26			Exam 1
Unit 3			
Why We Do What We Do, Part 1: Procedures that Strengthen or Establish Behavior			
Week 6	TBD		
	Course-Based Research Planning		
	What is reinforcement?	Ch. 4	
Week 7	What is shaping?	Ch. 9	

	What is chaining?	Ch. 11 (pp. 153-156; 161-165)	
		Unit 3 In-Class Activity <i>Shaping v. Chaining</i>	Quiz 3 due at 11:59PM
Mini Unit 4 Why We Do What We Do, Part 2: Procedures that Weaken or Eliminate Behavior			
Week 8	What is the function-based approach to challenging behavior?	Ch. 13	
		Ch. 13, cont'd	
	What is differential reinforcement?	Ch. 15 (pp. 297-313) Ch. 16 (pp. 327-337)	Unit Reflection due at 11:59PM
Week 10	What are antecedent interventions?	Ch. 15 & 16 cont'd	Mini-Unit 4 Quiz due at 11:59PM
		Trending Now & Review	
			Exam 2
Unit 5 Why We Do What We Do, Part 3: Language, Rules, and the "World within the Skin"			
Week 11	What is cognitive behavior analysis?	Ch. 25 Harris (2009)	
		Ch. 25, cont'd	
		Unit 5 In-Class Activity <i>Procrastinating in College (P1)</i>	Deadline to withdraw from course with a grade of "W"
Week 12	What are behavioral contracts?	Ch. 23	
		Ch. 23, cont'd	
		Unit 5 In-Class Activity <i>Procrastinating in College (P2)</i>	Quiz 5 due at 11:59PM
Unit 6 Application Spotlight, Part 1: Student-Nominated Topics			
Week 13	How can principles of learning help to [Student Nominated]?		
	Introduction to Unit 7 Assignment		Unit Reflection due at 11:59PM
Week 14	Course-Based Research Check-In		Mini-Unit 6 Quiz due at 11:59PM
		Trending Now & Review	
			Exam 3
Unit 7 Application Spotlight, Part 2: Student-Nominated Topics			
Week 15		See survey Week 11 (Article TBD by 4/7)	
		See survey Week 11 (Article TBD by 4/7)	
		Course Wrap-Up & Review	Final Assignment due at 11:59PM
Week 16	Final Exam – Wednesday, 12/10, 10-11:50AM		Cumulative Final

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