



Psy 525: Behavior Analysis Applied to Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disorders Fall 2025

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Meeting location: Online through Blackboard/Zoom

Phone: 616-331-3513

Office hours: By request

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers assessment and intervention strategies for working with individuals with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders from a behavior analytic perspective to teach, strengthen, generalize, and maintain behaviors. Students will learn how to provide behaviorally based training and supervision.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Apply the principles of behavior analysis to addressing the learning and behavior support needs of individuals with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders.
2. Describe the process of selecting behavior targets for intervention and developing instructional programs to teach desired behaviors.
3. Compare and contrast various intervention strategies such as natural environment teaching with discrete trial teaching.
4. Develop language programming based on verbal behavior.
5. Provide training and supervision for the delivery of behavioral practices.

READINGS

Listed in Course Readings below the course schedule and posted in Blackboard.

COURSE INFORMATION

Blackboard is the Course Management System

To access Blackboard, go to <https://lms.gvsu.edu/> and enter your log in and password.

Take a look at the GVSU Online Learning pages to find numerous materials about using Blackboard and online learning <http://www.gvsu.edu/online/>.

Check the current [technical requirements](#) to use Blackboard and [preferred browser information](#). If you experience technical problems, check the help website <http://www.gvsu.edu/it/learn/>. If you need further assistance, contact the help desk by email or phone - helpdesk@gvsu.edu or 616-331-3513.

Graduate Writing Resources

The [Graduate Writing Resources](#) available to assist with all kinds of writing tasks and they will give feedback on writing assignments. It is not just for students who struggle with writing. They can help any student improve writing skills.

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.

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 [Student Accessibility Resources](#) office (215 The Blue Connection) 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.

Attendance Policy

In the event of an unavoidable absence from a synchronous meeting or exam window (e.g., illness, family emergency, weather-related disruption), students will have the opportunity to complete an alternative activity or to reschedule the exam as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours. Please notify your instructor of any planned, non-emergency scheduling conflicts as soon as possible.

Makeup/Late Work Policy

Students will not have the opportunity to make up points lost due to late or missing discussion posts, assignments, or practice quizzes unless we have made an arrangement in advance or you have an excused absence. 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.

GVSU POLICIES

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.

Academic Integrity

Please review the [GVSU Academic Misconduct Policies and Procedures](#)

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. You may explore these options for this 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 this class, please follow [guidance from the American Psychological Association](#) for explaining the role of AI and citing any specific information from AI sources.

GVSU is dedicated to advancing artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in a manner that is ethical, responsible, and aligned with our academic and community values. Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can be extremely helpful when used thoughtfully and ethically. In this class, I have listed the acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI:

- Acceptable AI Uses:
 - Helping you study (e.g., explaining complex concepts in a simpler or different way to help your understanding)
 - Checking grammar or clarity in your own writing (not writing entire sentences or rewording your work entirely)
 - Generating practice scenarios
 - Assistance with citations in assignments
- Unacceptable AI Uses:
 - Submitting AI-generated text as your own work (i.e., copying full sentences)
 - Completing any aspect of exams or quizzes
 - Completing any aspect of discussion topic assignments
- Cautionary Uses:
 - Relying on summaries of course readings will be insufficient for complete understanding of material

Bottom line: Don't let AI complete assignments without engaging with the material. You are learning to become a professional school psychologist. Prioritize your learning, which includes your ability to remember, understand, analyze, evaluate, apply, and create.

If you are unsure whether you can use AI for an assignment in the class, please ask in advance. We are all learning together how we can use this technology for effective learning. Using AI for purposes not listed above without prior approval will be considered unacceptable use.

If unacceptable use of AI is suspected, a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the issue and a warning may be given the first time. Further misuse of AI will be treated as academic misconduct.

COURSE ORGANIZATION and ASSIGNMENTS

Synchronous Meeting (2 synchronous meetings)

Synchronous meetings will provide an opportunity to talk about course materials and assignments, as well as prepare for exams. We may have guest speakers on occasion. The date and time for these synchronous meetings is listed on Blackboard.

Readings (weekly)

You will have book chapters and articles to read weekly. It is critical to stay up on the readings. This is where you will learn much of the content, which is cumulative over the course of the program. Most importantly, reading content is necessary for your work as a practitioner.

Learning Units (two-week units)

The learning units will be a foundational part of the course, and this is where you will find instructions for each two-week segment of the course including reading assignments, course content presentations, practice activities, and assignments. Units will open up two weeks at a time and an assignment will be due at the end of the two-week period. All previous units will be open throughout the course.

Discussion – (each Learning unit)

The discussion topic will be posted with each unit to promote discussion related to the topics covered in the unit. It is important to have interactions with others around the content. A grading rubric is provided on the Blackboard site under Course Information.

Assignments – (each Learning Unit)

You will have an assignment associated with each learning unit. These will vary in type and length, but most will involve practice or application of concepts from the unit content. These are graded and will constitute an important part of your learning and grade for the course. All written assignments must be prepared in a professional manner. More information about each assignment will be provided on Blackboard.

Exams – (3 exams)

You will have 3 open-note, timed exams scheduled throughout the semester focused on 2-3 units of course content. The exams will include primarily short answer and essay questions but may also include multiple choice and fill in the blank questions. The exams will be administered through Blackboard. You will have a specific amount of time to complete the exam. *Although you may use notes for the exam, it will be necessary to complete all readings and study to become fluent in the content to complete the questions in the allotted time. Many of the questions will ask you to synthesize and apply information and you will not find the answers directly in the materials. **You may not use AI for the exams.***

*Note: We will not use Respondus Lockdown since these are open-note exams.

POINTS AND GRADING

Assignment	Points	Total Points for Semester
Synchronous meetings (2)	8	16
Discussion board (6)	10	60
Assignments (6)	20	120
Exams (3)	50	150
TOTAL POINTS		346

Final Grades

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%

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Unit Dates	Learning Unit	Readings	Assignments
Unit 1 Aug 25- Sept 7	Foundational concepts and principles for teaching students with ASD/DD Evidence-based interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boutot & Hume (2012) Spencer et al (2012) Livanis et al. (2013) Test et al. (2014) Hirota & King (2023) – optional Lai et al. (2020) - optional 	Assignment 1 Discussion board
Unit 2 Sept 8-21	Foundations of Behavior Change and Intervention Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School based services Selecting, implementing, and evaluating interventions Motivation & choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Odom et al. (2021) Adcock & Cuvo (2009) Carnett et al. (2014) Noel & Getch (2016) 	Synch mtg 1 - 9/11 Assignment 2 Discussion board
Exam 1 – Sept 22nd			
Unit 3 Sept 22- Oct 5	Instructional supports in a school setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive support Academic engagement Peer to peer support Self-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hart & Whalon (2008) Cohen et al. (2018) Schulze (2016) Koegel et al. (2014) Ziegler et al. (2020) 	Assignment 3 Discussion board
Unit 4 Oct 6-19	Intensive, individualized instructional practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrete trial teaching Errorless teaching Generalization and maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steege et al. (2007) Weiss & Zane (2010) Ferrioli et al. (2005) Haq & Aranki (2019) Noell et al. (2011) Schwartz et al. (2013) 	Assignment 4 Discussion board
Exam 2 – Oct 22nd			
Unit 5 Oct 20-Nov 2	Communication Systems and Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ganz et al. (2012) Chavers et al 2021 Thiemann-Bourque et al. 2017 Douglas and Gerge (2019) 	Assignment 5 Discussion board
Unit 6 Nov 3-16	Verbal Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooper et al. (2020) – Ch. 18 OR Carr & Miguel (2013) Sundberg & Michael (2001) Pyles et al. (2021) 	Synch mtg 3 - 11/12 Assignment 6 Discussion board
Unit 7 Nov 17-Dec 7 3-week unit	Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DiGennaro et al. (2018) Anderson et al. (2018) Fryling (2014) Ingersoll et al. (2016) 	Assignment 6 Discussion board
Exam 3 – Dec 11th			

Course Readings

Adcock, J., & Cuvo, A. J. (2009). Enhancing learning for children with autism spectrum disorders in regular education by instructional modifications. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders, 3*(2), 319-328.

Anderson, C. M., Smith, T., & Iovannone, R. (2018). Building capacity to support students with autism spectrum disorder: A modular approach to intervention. *Education and Treatment of Children, 41*(1), 107-137.

Boutot, E. A., & Hume, K. (2012). Beyond time out and table time: Today's applied behavior analysis for students with autism. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 47*(1), 23-38.

Carnett, A., Raulston, T., Lang, R., Tostanoski, A., Lee, A., Sigafoos, J., & Machalicek, W. (2014). Effects of a perseverative interest-based token economy on challenging and on-task behavior in a child with autism. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10864-014-9195-7>

Carr, J. E., & Miguel, C. F. (2013). The analysis of verbal behavior and its therapeutic applications. In G. J. Madden, W. V. Dube, T. D. Hackenberg, G. P. Hanley, & K. A. Lattal (Eds.), *APA handbook of behavior analysis, Vol. 2. Translating principles into practice* (pp. 329–352). American Psychological Association. (chapter 13)

Cengher, M., Shamoun, K., Moss, P., Roll, D., Feliciano, G., & Fienup, D. M. (2015). A comparison of the effects of two prompt-fading strategies on skill acquisition in children with autism spectrum disorders. *Behavior Analysis in Practice, 9*(2), 115-125.

Chavers, T. N., Morris, M., Schlosser, R. W., & Koula, R. (2021). Effects of a Systematic Augmentative and Alternative Communication Intervention Using a Speech-Generating Device on Multistep Requesting and Generic Small Talk for Children with Severe Autism Spectrum Disorder. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 30*, 2476–2491.

Cohen, A., & Demchak, M. (2018). Use of visual supports to increase task independence in students with severe disabilities in inclusive educational settings. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 53*(1), 84-99.

DiGennaro Reed, F. D., Blackman, A. L., Erath, T. G., Brand, D., & Novak, M. D. (2018). Guidelines for using behavioral skills training to provide teacher support. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 50*(6), 373-380.

Douglas, S. N., & Gerde, H. K. (2019). A strategy to support the communication of students with autism spectrum disorder. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 51*(6), 448–456.

Ferrioli, S., Hughes, C., & Smith, T. (2005). A model for problem solving in discrete trial training for children with autism. *Journal of Early and Intensive Behavior Intervention*, 2(4), 224-246.

Fryling, M. J. (2014). Contextual intervention for caregiver non-adherence with behavioral intervention plans. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, 36(3), 191–203.

Ganz, J. B., Simpson, R. L., & Lund, E. M. (2012). The picture exchange communication system (PECS): A promising method for improving communicating skills of learners with autism spectrum disorders. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 47(2), 176-186.

Haq, S. S., & Aranki, J. (2019). Comparison of traditional and embedded DTT on problem behavior and responding to instructional targets. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, doi:10.1007/s40617-018-00324-3

Hart, J. E., & Whalon, K. J. (2008). 20 ways to promote academic engagement and communication of students with autism spectrum disorder in inclusive settings. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 44(2), 116-120.

Hirota, T., & King, B. H. (2023). Autism spectrum disorder: A review. *JAMA*, 329(2), 157–168. (optional)

Ingersoll, B., Wainer, A. L., Berger, N. I., Pickard, K. E., & Bonter, N. (2016). Comparison of a self-directed and therapist-assisted telehealth parent-mediated intervention for children with ASD: A pilot RCT. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 46(7), 2275-2284.

Koegel, L. K., Park, M. N., & Koegel, R. L. (2014). Using self-management to improve the reciprocal social conversation of children with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(5), 1055-1063.

Lai, M.-C., Anagnostou, E., Wiznitzer, M., Allison, C., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2020). Evidence-based support for autistic people across the lifespan: maximising potential, minimising barriers, and optimising the person-environment fit. *The Lancet. Neurology*, 19(5), 434–451. (optional)

Livanis, A., Benvenuto, S., MERTTURK, A., & Hanthorn, C. A. (2013). Treatment integrity in autism spectrum disorder interventions. In S. Goldstein, & J. A. Naglieri (Eds.), *Interventions for autism spectrum disorders: Translating science into practice; interventions for autism spectrum disorders: Translating science into practice* (pp. 19-37). Springer: New York, NY.

Noel, C. R., & Getch, Y. Q. (2016). Noncontingent reinforcement in after-school settings to decrease classroom disruptive behavior for students with autism spectrum disorder. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, doi 10.1007/s40617-016-0117-0

Noell, G. H., Call, N. A., & Ardoin, S. P. (2011). Building complex repertoires from discrete behaviors by establishing stimulus control, behavioral chains, and strategic behavior. In W. W. Fisher, C. C. Piazza & H. S. Roane (Eds.), *Handbook of applied behavior analysis* (Chapter 15 - pp. 250-269).

Odom, S.L., Hall, L.J., Morin, K.L. *et al.* (2021). Educational interventions for children and youth with autism: A 40-year perspective. *Journal of Autism Developmental Disorders*, 1-16.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-04990-1>

Pyles, M. L., Chastain, A. N., & Miguel, C. F. (2021). Teaching children with autism to mand for information using “why?” as a function of denied access. *Analysis of Verbal Behavior*, 37, 17–34.

Schulze, M. A. (2016). Self-management strategies to support students with ASD. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 48(5), 225-231.

Schwartz, I., Thomas, C. J., McBride, B., & Sandall, S. (2013). A school-based preschool program for children with ASD: A quasi-experimental assessment of child change in project DATA. *School Mental Health: A Multidisciplinary Research and Practice Journal*, 5(4), 221-232.

Spencer, T. D., Dietrich, R. & Slocum, T. A. (2012). Evidence-based practice: A framework for making effective decisions. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 35(2), 127-151.

Steege, M. W., Mace, F. C., Perry, L., & Longnecker, H. (2007). Applied behavior analysis: Beyond discrete trial teaching. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(1), 91-99.

Sundberg, M. L. (2014). *VB-MAPP. Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program* (2nd ed.). AVB Press (pp. 1-15).

Sundberg, M. L., & Michael, J. (2001). The benefits of Skinner’s analysis of verbal behavior for children with autism. *Behavior Modification*, 25(5), 698–724.

Test, D. W., Smith, L. E., & Carter, E. W. (2014). Equipping youth with autism spectrum disorders for adulthood: Promoting rigor, relevance, and relationships. *Remedial and Special Education*, 35(2), 80-90.

Thiemann-Bourque, K. S., McGuff, S., & Goldstein, H. (2017). Training Peer Partners to Use a Speech-Generating Device With Classmates With Autism Spectrum Disorder: Exploring Communication Outcomes Across Preschool Contexts. *Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research*, 60(9), 2648–2662.

Weiss, M.J., & Zane, T. (2010). Three important things to consider when starting intervention for a child diagnosed with autism. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 3, 58-60.

Ziegler, M., Matthews, A., Mayberry, M., Owen-DeSchryver, J., & Carter, E. W. (2020). From barriers to belonging: Promoting inclusion and relationships through the peer to peer program. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 52(6), 426-434.

Tips for a Successful Learning Experience

**Although these might seem obvious and simple, they will make a difference*

- ❑ Read the syllabus and all course information on Blackboard
- ❑ Stay organized and track due dates
- ❑ Plan weekly study times
- ❑ KEEP UP ON THE READING
- ❑ Log into Blackboard at least 3-4 times per week to check announcements, discussion board, and interact with course material
- ❑ Get to know the other students in the class and help each other learn the language and the concepts
- ❑ Post questions, comments, and ideas on discussion board
- ❑ Engage with the instructor and ask questions