Contact Information

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Books

- Journal articles (to be determined).

Table 1
Topics & Reading List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Week</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History of Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Value</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td>1–2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pavlovian: Mechanisms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues FEB 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pavlovian: Theories</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4–5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pavlovian: Back to Behavior</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6–7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri MAR 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pavlovian: Generalizability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental: Mechanisms</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues APR 8</td>
<td>Exam 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental: Stimulus Control</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Be Determined</td>
<td></td>
<td>13–14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat MAY 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8–10amExam 4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Course Description

Course is housed in a Social Science department.
Prerequisite: Psychology 101 or permission of instructor.

A survey of major concepts and issues in conditioning, learning and memory processes. Emphasizes research dealing with the ways learning and memory interact with other variables such as development and species-typical behavior.

This course will introduce you to the psychology of learning, the process of changing behavior as a result of experience. The course will not address how students learn in the classroom (although our material is certainly relevant to that); instead we will focus on basic research in learning, often involving nonhuman animals. Because experience can affect behavior in many ways, the field of learning is a diverse one; we will examine many of its topics. Learning researchers must take great care to ensure that they understand exactly how an experience has affected a behavior; therefore learning studies often involve complicated controls in order to determine the exact nature of the learning that has occurred. By the end of the semester you will be better scientists (or at least better designers of well-controlled experiments) as a result of what you learn in this course.

My own interests lie squarely in the realm of Pavlovian conditioning, and it might seem that much of the semester is devoted to this topic. Instrumental learning is so heavily influences by Pavlovian conditioning that the two are hardly separable, and in fact time spent considering Pavlovian matters directly benefits one’s understanding of instrumental learning.

An important component of the course will be an examination of scientific articles. Papers will be selected that highlight both what we know about learning and how we know it. If you leave this class understanding how to read scientific articles then this course will have succeeded on at least one front.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, the student will be able to

- explain the evolutionary processes that shape behavior.
- discuss the procedural differences between Pavlovian and instrumental learning.
- explain the major theories of Pavlovian and instrumental learning.
- design an experiment that addresses the role of learning in behavior.
- read and understand the scientific literature in learning theory.

Grading

Exams

There will be four exams, consisting for the most part of short-answer essay questions. Each exam will cover explicitly the material presented in class and in the readings since the previous exam. There is no cumulative final exam; however, you should not assume simply because you have been tested on something that it is no longer important. An understanding of material presented later in the semester will require a knowledge of material presented earlier.

If you miss one exam, for a sufficiently serious reason, and inform me of this within 24 hours of the exam, you may take a make-up test. If you miss more than one exam, you will receive a grade of ZERO for each additional missed exam.
Term paper

A term paper is required in this course. It should be about 5 or 6 pages long (excluding title page, abstract, and references) and must address an article selected from a list that I provide. You may choose the articles, but I will have to approve the choice before you write the paper. **Articles must be chosen by Wednesday, February 26.** Your paper should briefly address these aspects of the article:

- What led up to this work?
- What hypothesis was being addressed?
- Briefly, what did the authors do?
- What were the results?
- What did the authors conclude about their hypothesis?
- Was this conclusion justified?
- What additional work could be done on this question?

More information about the paper will be forthcoming. The paper must be written according to APA style. **The due date for the paper is Friday, April 11 (I will review a printed draft of the paper if you turn it in by March 31); your paper MUST be turned in to me in class on the due date. Late papers will be penalized at a rate of 10% of their potential value per day.**

Electronic Submission of Papers

The final paper must be turned in both as a printed copy and electronically. Submission of a printed copy ensures that the paper that I grade is formatted the way that you intend. There is no guarantee that formatting of an electronic version will look like what you expect (different versions of Word format things differently, for example). The printed copy must be turned in by the deadline. You can email the electronic version to me up to a day later, but its content must be the same as the printed version. Electronic files should be in LaTeX, text, or word-processing (e.g., Word) format. If you want to use a different format please talk to me about it ahead of time.

Please be aware that in the event of questions about academic honesty the e-paper might be submitted to an online service that checks for plagiarism, or portions of it might be used for Google searches. This should pose no problem for anyone unless you have plagiarized portions of the paper. Please do not do so.

Course Grade

Your grade will be based on a weighted average of your grades on the exams and the paper. The exams will count for 85% of your grade (lowest test score: 10%; others 25%), and the paper 15%. The exams will count for 85% of your grade (lowest test score: 10%; others 25%), and the paper 15%. Then your grade for the course will be determined as indicated in the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wghtd Ave</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Wghtd Ave</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90–100</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>70–75.99</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.67–89.99</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>66.67–69.99</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.33–86.66</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>63.33–66.66</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–83.33</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>60–63.33</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.67–79.99</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>&lt; 60</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.33–76.66</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Class Participation

Learning can be a complex and difficult topic. I hope to make it understandable by fostering an atmosphere of shared inquiry and discussion. It is not possible to benefit fully from class discussions without being present. And remember, as a meme circulating online says, “I can explain it to you, but I can’t understand it for you.” You might find yourself thinking deeply about material, and that’s a good thing.

Disability Statement

If you have a disability and may require accommodations or modifications in class instruction or course-related activities, please contact the Learning Support Center (LSC) staff who can arrange for reasonable accommodations for students who provide documentation of their disability/condition. If you are presently registered with the LSC and have requested accommodations through the LSC for this semester, please plan to meet with me as early as possible to discuss the best way to implement these accommodations in this class. The LSC is located on the third floor of the Seeley Mudd library or call 517-629-0825.

Attendance

Attendance at class is expected. As you will learn from the first exam, material presented in lecture is important, and material presented in lecture will not always appear in the readings. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed, both in terms of lecture material and announcements about exams, assignments, etc.

Albion College policy on attendance: “Regular attendance in all classes is expected. Every absence from class is inevitably a loss — usually one which can never be made up. A student has the responsibility to inform his or her faculty member, whenever possible in advance, of an absence due to serious or prolonged illness, and verification of absences due to emergency reasons, may be obtained from the Office of Residential Life.”

Academic Integrity

Albion College policy, endorsed by you professor: “As an academic community, Albion College is firmly committed to honor and integrity in the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, as a member of this academic community, each student acknowledges responsibility for his or her actions and commits to the highest standards of integrity. In doing so, each student makes a covenant with the college not to engage in any form of academic dishonesty, fraud, cheating, or theft.”

Academic Skills Center

THE ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTER, located in the Seeley Mudd Building of the Library, supports student success at Albion College through the Learning Support Center, the Quantitative Skills Center, and the Writing Center. The ASC also coordinates academic peer tutoring services and educational technologies for enhancing student learning. For information, visit the ASC website at http://www.albion.edu/asc.

Courtesy

Please realize that you are not the only person in the classroom. You and your classmates are here to learn, and there are ways of behaving that will facilitate this (and ways that will interfere). Please keep these suggestions in mind:

1. Arrive on time. If you arrive late please enter quietly and take a seat near the door.
2. Plan to remain attentive and seated until I dismiss you. If you know that you will have to leave early sit near the door and leave quietly.
3. Cell phones should be off or silent during class. Texting or playing games takes your attention away from the material that you are learning; if you are using your phone I will ask you to put it away.

4. You may use a computer for note-taking. Facebook or other web sites are not necessary for note-taking; I suggest that you disconnect from the network while in class.

5. Talking (even quietly) with people near you distract them and others nearby. Don’t interfere with the opportunity for others to learn.

6. You do not have to be in class if there is somewhere that you would rather be. I am here to help you learn, and you and your classmates are here to learn. If your behavior interferes with this I will ask you to leave.

7. Please refer to my blog comments related to Staying on a Professor’s Good Side (actual title relates to Graduate School, but it is all related) at campus.albion.edu/wjwilson/2012/10/10/thoughts-on-grad-school-admission/

A Final Note

If you find that you need assistance with the material presented in this course, or if you just want to talk about it, please see me. My office hours are listed above, but if you cannot meet with me at those times please make an appointment with me. I am on campus every day, often including weekends, and will find time to meet with you.