

PSYCHOLOGY 6760: SKINNER'S BEHAVIORISM

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
COURSE SYLLABUS VERSION 2.0
FALL 2006

COURSE INFORMATION

Meeting Time:	Tuesdays 6:00pm – 9:00pm	Location:	Dunbar Hall Room 4203
Instructor:	Eric J. Fox, Ph.D.	Office Hours:	Tuesdays, 4:00-5:00pm Wednesdays, 12:00-1:00pm or by appointment
Email:	eric.fox@wmich.edu		
Phone:	(269) 387-4479		
Office:	Wood Hall Room 3522		

COURSE OVERVIEW

In this course you will learn about the theoretical and philosophical foundations of Skinner's radical behaviorism, as well as explore how the continual interpretation, modification, expansion, and application of these foundations guides and informs the field of behavior analysis.

This course will follow a discussion seminar format, not a lecture format. Thus, it is vital that you read all assigned materials before class and be prepared to discuss them during class. Many of the activities and assignments described below are designed to foster discussion of the readings and active participation by all students.

TEXT & MATERIALS

The following books are required for the course, and are available at the WMU and University Bookstores:

1. Skinner, B. F. (1974). *About behaviorism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
2. Catania, A. C., & Harnad, S. (Eds.). (1988). *The selection of behavior: The operant behaviorism of B. F. Skinner: Comments and consequences*. New York: Cambridge University Press. [Note: This book is out of print, but will be available as a coursepack.]

In addition to these books, a coursepack containing the other articles and chapters required for the course will also be available in the WMU and University Bookstores.

WEBSITE

A course website will be maintained using WebCT. The website has the following key features:

- Course materials – a variety of materials will be available, including the syllabus, PowerPoint slides from lectures, and handouts
- Online self-quizzes – these are **required** weekly assignments (see next page)
- Gradebook – all scores and grades will be available online

You can access the course website via **GoWMU** (<http://gowmu.wmich.edu>) by clicking on the "My E-Learning WebCT Vista" link on your home page. If you have problems accessing or using the course website, check here the WMU elearning website (<http://www.wmich.edu/elearning>) for help or report a problem using their online form (<http://www.wmich.edu/vista/problem-report-form.html>).

REQUIREMENTS

Discussion Questions

For each class, you will be required to prepare at least three discussion questions based on the assigned readings. The questions should address substantial issues and should be designed to promote discussion of the issues. You should be prepared to take the floor when your questions are raised in class, although you may not be required to address any or all of your own questions. Each set of questions will be scored on a 15-point scale (see last page of syllabus for a detailed scoring guide). Discussion questions must be submitted via the course website by 9:00am the day of the class. You will lose 1 point for every 15 minutes your discussion questions are late, and after one hour you will not receive any points at all for the assignment. If you have trouble accessing or submitting your questions via the course website, you may email them to the course instructor.

Online Self-Quizzes

Each week you must complete an online self-quiz available on the course website. The quizzes cover key points and issues in the assigned readings for that class. You must *complete* the self-quiz by 9:00am the day of class. You may use your readings and notes while taking the self-quiz, and you may take it wherever and whenever you like (before the deadline). Each self-quiz consists of 15 multiple-choice questions worth 1 point each.

You can re-take each self-quiz as many times as you like before the deadline; only your highest score will count toward your grade. It is recommended that you re-take the self-quiz as many times as necessary to obtain a perfect score – missing a point or two on each self-quiz adds up over the semester and can make a big difference on your final grade! This means you should not wait until 8:00am on Tuesday to attempt the self-quiz. You may need several attempts to earn a perfect score, and should allot yourself enough time to do so.

Attendance & Participation

The majority of each class period will be devoted to discussions based on the questions you submit, and you are expected to participate actively. You will earn 5 points for attending and positively contributing to each class. Participation points will sometime be based on your performance on specific class activities (i.e., other than discussion). An atmosphere of mutual respect is expected to be maintained during all class discussions and activities.

Final Paper

You will write a 10-15 page paper for this course related to key philosophical assumptions of radical behaviorism, important conceptual or empirical developments in behavior analysis, an important historical influence on Skinner's system, or some other approved topic. Further details about the structure and nature of the paper will be provided in class, along with a list of possible topics.

Class Presentation

You will be required to present your final paper in summary form to the class during one of the final three class periods. You will have 10 minutes to speak, followed by a 5-minute discussion/question-and-answer session. The final presentation will be worth 60 points, with up to 20 points awarded via a peer evaluation system and up to 40 points awarded by the instructor.

RFT Tutorial

You will be required to complete a fully online tutorial on Relational Frame Theory to facilitate discussion of this theory and verbal behavior in general. The tutorial may be completed any time before the deadline (see Course Calendar), and can be accessed via any computer connected to the web at http://www.contextualpsychology.org/rft_tutorial. The Course Access Code for this course is: G2006FA174.

The tutorial takes most people approximately 3 hours to complete, but you do not have to complete it in one sitting. You can logout using the "Exit" button and the tutorial will save your progress (the next time you login you will start at the beginning of the last uncompleted lesson). A total of 40 points is available for completing the tutorial. You will receive 4 points for simply completing the tutorial, and up to 36 points based on your performance on the tutorial quiz. The tutorial quiz can be re-taken as many times as you wish; only your highest score will count toward your grade.

GRADE

Your course grade is based on the points you receive on the assignments described above. Point totals are summarized below.

Assignment	Points	% of total
Discussion Questions (10 sets @ 15 points each)	150	24.0%
Online Self-Quizzes (10 @ 15 points each)	150	24.0%
Final Paper	150	24.0%
Attendance/Participation (15 classes @ 5 points each)	75	12.0%
Class Presentation	60	9.6%
Relational Frame Theory Tutorial	40	6.4%
TOTAL	625	100%

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

A: 562-625 pts

BA: 531-561 pts

B: 500-530 pts

CB: 468-499 pts

C: 437-467 pts

INCOMPLETES

In keeping with the University's policy on the grade of Incomplete, a grade of incomplete (I) will **NOT** be given as a substitute for a failing grade. Incompletes are only given when a student who is passing course with a grade of C or better has to miss the remainder of the semester due to an unavoidable circumstance (e.g., a serious illness). Contact the instructor as soon as possible if you believe you need (and are eligible) to take an Incomplete for the course.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate Catalog (pp. 274-276) that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity, and computer misuse.

If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test. Any student found to be responsible for the act of academic dishonesty will be given a failing grade in the course and may be suspended or expelled from the university.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all qualified persons have equal opportunity and access to education regardless of the presence of any disabling conditions. Access to education means providing students with the tools needed to be successful in higher education, including physical accommodations in classroom and lab space, course substitutions and/or waivers, modifications of classroom presentations, and modifications in testing and course requirements. If you have some specific learning disability, hearing impairment, visual impairment, seizure disorder, motor impairment, psychological disorder(s), and/or any other disabilities, you should register with the Disabled Student Services on campus, get a note from them outlining any special attention you may need, and bring that to me as soon as possible. I will make every effort to provide any accommodations necessary.

COURSE CALENDAR

The class will meet every Tuesday from 6:00pm to 9:00pm as outlined below. Reading assignments indicate the readings that should be completed **before** that class date. Both the schedule and reading list are tentative and subject to change.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Sept. 5	Course Intro & Overview	
Sept. 12	<i>About Behaviorism</i>	<i>About Behaviorism</i> Introduction and Chapters 1 – 8
Sept. 19	<i>About Behaviorism</i>	<i>About Behaviorism</i> Chapters 9 – 14
Sept. 26	Skinner's Canonical Papers	<i>The Selection of Behavior</i> Introduction, pp. 3 – 8 Selection by Consequences , pp. 11 – 76
Oct. 3	Skinner's Canonical Papers	<i>The Selection of Behavior</i> Methods & Theories in the Experimental Analysis of Behavior , pp. 77 – 149
Oct. 10	Skinner's Canonical Papers	<i>The Selection of Behavior</i> The Operational Analysis of Psychological Terms, pp. 150 – 217
Oct. 17	Skinner's Canonical Papers	<i>The Selection of Behavior</i> An Operant Analysis of Problem Solving, pp. 218 – 277
Oct. 24	Skinner's Canonical Papers Outline of final paper due	<i>The Selection of Behavior</i> Behaviorism at Fifty , pp. 278 – 381
Oct. 31	Skinner's Canonical Papers	<i>The Selection of Behavior</i> The Phylogeny and Ontogeny of Behavior , pp. 382 – 461
Nov. 7	Private Events & Mentalism	Moore, J. (1980). On behaviorism and private events. <i>The Psychological Record</i> , 30, 459-475. Moore, J. (1981). On mentalism, methodological behaviorism, and radical behaviorism. <i>Behaviorism</i> , 9, 55-77. Moore, J. (2003). Some further thoughts on the pragmatic and behavioral conception of private events. <i>Behavior and Philosophy</i> , 31, 151-157. Hayes, S. C., & Brownstein, A. J. (1986). Mentalism, behavior-behavior relations, and a behavior-analytic view of the purposes of science. <i>The Behavior Analyst</i> , 9, 175-190.
Nov. 14	Rule-Governed Behavior & Verbal Behavior RFT Tutorial Due	Michael, J. (1993). Elementary verbal relations. In <i>Concepts and principles of behavior analysis</i> (pp. 95-97). Kalamazoo, MI: Association for Behavior Analysis. Hayes, S. C., Zettle, R. D., & Rosenfarb, I. (1989). Rule-following. In S. C. Hayes (Ed.), <i>Rule-governed behavior: Cognition, contingencies, and instructional control</i> (pp. 191-220). New York: Plenum. Hayes, S. C., Blackledge, J. T., & Barnes-Holmes, D. B. (2001). Language and cognition: Constructing an alternative approach within the behavioral tradition. In S. C. Hayes, D. Barnes-Holmes, & B. Roche (Eds.), <i>Relational frame theory: A post-Skinnerian account of human language and cognition</i> (pp. 3-20). New York: Plenum. Palmer, D. C. (2004). Data in search of a principle: A review of <i>Relational frame theory: A post-Skinnerian account of human language and cognition</i> . <i>Journal of the Experimental Analysis of</i>

		<p><i>Behavior</i>, 81, 189-204.</p> <p>Hayes, S. C., & Barnes-Holmes, D. (2004). Relational operants: Processes and implications: A response to Palmer's review of <i>Relational frame theory</i>. <i>Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior</i>, 82, 213-224.</p>
Nov. 21	<p>Pragmatism/Contextualism</p> <p>Draft of final paper due (optional)</p>	<p>Baum, W. M. (2005). Behaviorism as a philosophy of science. In <i>Understanding behaviorism: Behavior, culture, and evolution</i> (2nd ed., pp. 20-35). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.</p> <p>Hayes, S. C., Hayes, L. J., & Reese, H. W. (1988). Finding the philosophical core: A review of Stephen C. Pepper's <i>World Hypotheses: A study in Evidence</i>. <i>Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior</i>, 50, 97-111.</p> <p>Morris, E. K. (1993). Behavior analysis and mechanism: One is not the other. <i>The Behavior Analyst</i>, 16, 25-43.</p> <p>Morris, E. K. (1997). Some reflections on contextualism, mechanism, and behavior analysis. <i>The Psychological Record</i>, 47, 529-542.</p> <p>Excerpt from: Fox, E. J. (2006). Constructing a pragmatic science of learning and instruction with functional contextualism. <i>Educational Technology Research & Development</i>, 54, 5-36.</p>
Nov. 28		Class presentations
Dec. 5		Class presentations
Dec. 12 7:15-9:15pm	<p>Final Exams Week</p> <p>Final paper due</p>	Class presentations

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS SCORING CRITERIA

	needs work (0 pts)	okay (1 pt)	good/great! (2 pts)	Comments
Address substantial issues?				
Cover a range of issues?				
Likely to promote discussion?				
Clear and concise?				
Good integrative question?				
Complete and on time? (-1 point for every 15 min late* and -2 points for every missing question)	Points earned: X of 5			
TOTAL POINTS EARNED: X of 15				

* No points at all will be awarded if your questions are submitted more than 1 hour past the deadline (i.e., you will receive 0 of 15 possible points on the assignment)

Address substantial issues?

Do the questions deal with important, substantive issues in the readings **or** are they focused more on trivial issues or simple factual matters?

Cover a range of issues?

Do the questions cover a range of different issues from across all of the assigned readings for that day **or** do all (or several) of them focus on the same basic topic or portion of the assigned readings?

Likely to promote discussion?

Are the questions thought-provoking and likely to promote discussion **or** are they primarily just comments disguised as questions or essentially unanswerable questions?

Clear and concise?

Are the questions written in a clear and concise manner (shoot for no more than 80 words...remember, you can expand upon your question during class if you need to) **or** are they long, rambling, and difficult to understand?

Good integrative question?

Is there a question that meaningfully addresses an issue spanning two or more of the chapters or articles (the readings do not have to be from the same day) **or** do all of the questions address topics from a single chapter or article?