BEHV 5330
Verbal Behavior & the Analysis of Human Behavior
Credits: 03

Department of Behavior Analysis
The University of North Texas

Fall, 2009

PROFESSOR: Traci Cihon, PhD, BCBA-D

PROFESSOR CONTACT INFORMATION:
Email: traci.cihon@unt.edu
Phone: (940) 565-3318
Office Hours: Chilton 360B: Mondays 2 pm to 4 pm
Wednesdays 3 pm to 5 pm
or by appointment

WEB SITE ADDRESS: https://ecampus.unt.edu/webct/logon/3557159226171

COURSE TIME: Monday 5:00 pm to 7:50 pm. (Location: Chemistry 253)

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Official Course Description
Use of behavior analysis in understanding the nature and development of human communication. Explores how and why communication fails; develops guidelines for enhancing communication through understanding of the underlying behavioral processes.

Additional Course Description
The focus of this course is to introduce a behavioral framework for the analysis of verbal behavior. Skinner (1957) defined verbal behavior as behavior that is mediated through the reinforcement provided by another individual. He provided a framework of several elementary verbal operants defined by the environmental controlling variables and indirect action on the environment. In this course, students will learn about Skinner’s analysis of verbal behavior and the controlling variables associated with each verbal operant. In addition, we will discuss extensions of verbal operants and analyze multiply controlled verbal behavior. Students will read current research in the area of verbal behavior and how it has impacted and continues to impact instruction for individuals with impaired verbal repertoires.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course has been divided into units. Each unit has specific corresponding reading objectives. The units for the course are listed at the end of the syllabus. The reading objectives for each unit are provided as study guides, which are available on the course website (https://ecampus.unt.edu/webct/logon/3557159226171).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES & EVALUATION

Lecture/discussion
A lecture introducing the material for that week will occur during each class period. Lectures will encourage active student responding (either chorally or using response cards). Questions and discussions are encouraged.

Short Essays
Seven short essays will be due throughout the semester and will be written in class. Short essays should be short (no more than 200 words). Students will be given 10 min to write each short essay (students can bring their computers and type their responses if they prefer). Each short essay is worth 10 points. The topics are listed below.

*Short Essay 1: How does Skinner justify his term “verbal behavior” over the more traditional terms? What does Skinner find wrong with using the common terms such as speech, language, or linguistics?

Short Essay 2: In Chomsky’s (1959) critique of *Verbal Behavior* he frequently refers to S-R or stimulus-response psychology. Describe how critiquing Skinner’s *Verbal Behavior* from this perspective, rather than an operant conditioning perspective, may have led to the main tenets of Chomsky’s review.

Short Essay 3: Researchers and clinicians alike can easily transfer stimulus control from echoic control to control of other verbal operants once an echoic repertoire has been established. Often, we are asked to teach verbal behavior to individuals with limited echoic repertoires. Describe how you might develop initial mand relations with an individual without an echoic repertoire.

*Short Essay 4: Explain carefully how we could teach a monkey to wave at his deaf owner whenever the doorbell sounds, irrespective of the UEOs or CEOs that might be in strength at the moment the doorbell sounds. Let your training consist of two conditions: 1) develop some stimulus as a generalized conditioned reinforcer and 2) use the generalized conditioned reinforcer to bring the waving response under control of the doorbell.

Short Essay 5: Some have made the case that the behavior of the listener is synonymous with what we might refer to as “understanding”. Provide an account
for how listener behavior might be considered “understanding”. The account should take the form of a total verbal episode (your choice for the verbal relation), describing how the listener’s behavior of reinforcing the speaker’s behavior supports that the listener “understands” what the speaker is communicating.

*Short Essay 6: “Like the tree, I believe I will leave.” Explain the multiple control in that pun; that is, the critical term or phrase and the main thematic source.

Short Essay 7: Use a novel example(s) of verbal behavior to illustrate how the autoclitic relation alters the action the listener will take when responding to the speaker’s behavior.

SAFMEDS
The final checkout for SAFMEDS will occur on the last day of class. Students will checkout for a 1-min timing. The goal for the final checkout is 40-50 correct responses per minute, with the pinpointed learning channel being: see definition/say term. Students will be provided no more than five opportunities during the final class period to reach the fluency aim.

Fifty points are available for the final SAFMEDS checkout. Points will be awarded based on the following criteria:

- 40+ cpm 50 points
- 35-39 cpm 25 points
- 30-34 cpm 12 points
- 25-29 cpm 1 point
- 24 or less cpm 0 points

cpm = correct responses per minute

Take Home Examination
A take home examination will be due the 12th week of class. The take home examination will be worth 50 points. The take home examination will require that each student provide a succinct description of the critical features of each verbal operant discussed. A template will be provided.

Research Application
Each student will select a research article, each focusing on a verbal operant. The research application assignment should include a one paragraph (4 to 6 sentence) summary of the article, a description (approximately 1 page) of: (a) how the verbal relation(s) addressed in the article relate to one or more verbal operant(s) reviewed by Skinner (make sure to discuss the relevant controlling variables—think stimulus control); (b) the implications or relevance for individuals with developmental disabilities; and (c) how you might conduct a meaningful extension of that research. The description should go beyond simply proposing a replication with different participants or restating a direction for future research proposed by the author(s). The article
may be selected from the provided list, or students may choose another article (in the latter case, please attach a copy of the article along with the paper and obtain approval from the instructor). Research applications are due the last class session, but can be turned in any time throughout the semester. Students will also be given one rewrite option; however, the final draft is due the last class session. The research application assignment will be worth 70 points.

COURSE GRADES

Short Essays = 7 @ 10 pts each = 70 pts
Take Home Examination = 50 pts
Research Application = 70 pts
SAFMEDS = 50 pts
Total Points = 240 points

GRADE EQUIVALENTS (% of 240 points earned):

A: 93% to 100%  A-: 90% to 92%  B+: 87% to 89%  B: 83% to 86%
B-: 80% to 82%  C+: 77% to 79%  C: 73% to 76%  C-: 70% to 72%
F: 69% or less

ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at http://www.unt.edu/oda/apply/index.html. Also, you may visit the Office of Disability Accommodation in the University Union (room 321) or call us at (940) 565-4323.

POLICIES

No individual exceptions can be made to the syllabus.

Re-grades: If a student believes an error has been made in grading, a written request for reconsideration of the item(s) in question may be submitted within 1 week of receipt of the graded material. The written request should specify the item(s) in question, and the
reason the student believes the answer given was correct, citing relevant sources (e.g., page number from readings on which the answer was based).

**Absences:** If a student must be absent for any reason, s/he should arrange to submit the applicable written assignment early, as no assignments turned in after the due date can be accepted. Students are responsible for making their own arrangements to obtain information from any missed class period. There will be no additional make-up opportunities for missed examinations.

**Student Conduct:** Each student automatically certifies that any material submitted for grading is his/her own independent work. UNT policies require reporting of plagiarism or any suspected violations that constitute possible academic misconduct. Students are responsible for being familiar with the Code of Student Conduct.

Group work is encouraged; however, in the past there have been situations in which group work could have been considered cheating or plagiarism. “Legitimate” group work takes advantage of consultation with your peers, provides you with ideas, suggestions, corrections, etc., which you take into consideration in the development of your unique and individual product. Examples include reading the text and writing answers to the study guide items, then working closely with other students to compare study guide answers, and to attempt to resolve different understandings. Failing to do the reading, and memorizing answers that another student has written for the study guide is not legitimate group work; it is cheating. Drafting the assignments, then comparing specific aspects of your product to others’ is appropriate. Copying someone else’s work products (or making your work available to another student to copy) is not legitimate; it is cheating. Always, if you are unsure about boundaries of legitimate group work, please (1) ask for clarification from the instructor, and (2) make full disclosure so that there is no question about your intentions. We are very happy to talk about these boundaries and work with you to maximize your learning and maintain individual accountability.

**Assistance:** Students are encouraged to contact the instructor (by email or during office hours) or teaching assistant any time clarification or additional help in understanding the material is needed. Any questions that will aid you in mastering the material are welcomed.

**Diversity Statement:** It is the policy of the University of North Texas (and this instructor) not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability (where reasonable accommodations can be made), disabled veteran status or veteran of the Vietnam era status in its educational programs, activities, admissions or employment policies. In addition to complying with federal and state equal opportunity laws and regulations, the university through its diversity policy declares harassment based on individual differences (including sexual orientation) inconsistent with its mission and educational goals. Direct questions or concerns to the equal opportunity office, (940) 565-2456, or the dean of students, (940) 565-2648. TTY access is available through Relay Texas: (800) 735-2989.
REQUIRED TEXT, ARTICLES, AND COURSE MATERIALS


Cihon, T. M. (in preparation). Bridging basic and applied research on transfer of stimulus control: Implications for research on verbal behavior.


An erasable slate (can be a transparency with white paper underneath, along with an erasable marker).

**Technology requirements**

An active UNT email account, a computer or access to a computer and on-line access to course web site on Blackboard Vista (https://ecampus.unt.edu/webct/logon/3557159226171). This website will be the vehicle for obtaining key course materials; keeping track of your grades; communicating with the instructor, and classmates outside of class sessions; and other functions.

**OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS (and options for the research application assignment)**


Kelly, M. E., Schillingsburg, M. A., Castro, M. J., Addison, L. R., & LaRue, R. H. (2007). Further evaluation of emerging speech in children with developmental disabilities:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| 1 | Course Introduction; Review Syllabus  
Readings: Eshleman (1991); Marcon-Dawson et al. (2009); Petursdottir et al. (2009) |
|         | **September 7, 2009**  
NO CLASS  
LABOR CLASS |
| 2 | Lecture: Unit 1: Functional Analysis of Verbal Behavior  
Reading: Skinner Chapters 1&2  
Short Essay 1 |
| 3 | Lecture: Unit 2: Responses to Skinner's (1957) *Verbal Behavior*  
Reading: Chomsky (1959); MacCorquodale (1970)  
Short Essay 2 |
| 4 | Lecture: Unit 3: Mands I  
Reading: Skinner Chapter 3 |
| 5 | Lecture: Unit 3 (cont): Mands II  
Reading: Michael (1988); Shafer (1994) |
| 6 | Lecture: Unit 4: Echoics, textuals, transcription, & intraverbals  
Reading: Skinner Chapter 4; Axe (2008); Cihon (2007); Michael (1982)  
Short Essay 3 |
| 7 | Lecture: Unit 4 (cont): Echoics, textuals, transcription, & intraverbals II  
Reading: Skinner Chapter 4; Axe (2008); Cihon, 2007; Michael, 1982) |
| 8 | Lecture: Unit 5: Tacts I  
Reading: Skinner Chapter 5  
Short Essay 4 |
| 9 | Lecture: Unit 5 (cont): Tacts II  
Reading: Skinner Chapter 5 |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture:</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
<th>Due:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Nov 9, 2009</td>
<td><strong>Unit 6</strong>: Audience Control</td>
<td>Skinner Ch. 6 &amp; 7;</td>
<td><strong>TAKE HOME EXAMINATION</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Schlinger (2008)</td>
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<td><strong>Short Essay 5</strong></td>
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<td>11 Nov 16, 2009</td>
<td><strong>Unit 7</strong>: Multiple Control I</td>
<td>Skinner Chs. 9, 10, &amp; 11</td>
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<td>12 Nov 23, 2009</td>
<td><strong>Unit 7 (cont.)</strong>: Multiple Control II</td>
<td>Bondy, Tincani, &amp;</td>
<td><strong>TAKE HOME EXAMINATION</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Frost (2004); Cihon</td>
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<td><strong>Short Essay 6</strong></td>
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<td>13 Nov 30, 2009</td>
<td><strong>Unit 8</strong>: Autoclitics</td>
<td>Skinner Chs. 12 &amp; 13; Howard (1988)</td>
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<td>14 Dec 7, 2009</td>
<td><strong>Unit 9</strong>: Verbal Operants as a Unit of Analysis; Palmer video</td>
<td>Skinner Ch. 8; Normand (2009)</td>
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<td>15 Dec 14, 2009</td>
<td><strong>Unit 10</strong>: Self-Editing &amp; Self-Strengthening of VB</td>
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<td><strong>RESEARCH APPLICATION PAPER</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SAFMEDS FINAL CHECKOUT</strong></td>
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*The professor reserves the right to adjust and modify this schedule based on the needs of the students*

*Components of this syllabus are courtesy of Dr. Nancy A. Neef and Dr. John O. Cooper*
**BACB CONTENT AREA TASK LIST OBJECTIVES COVERED:**

### Content Area 2: Definition And Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK #</th>
<th>TASK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-7 2</td>
<td>Interpret articles from the behavior analytic literature.</td>
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### Content Area 3: Principles, Processes And Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK #</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-15</td>
<td>Define and provide examples of echoics and imitation.</td>
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<td>3-16</td>
<td>Define and provide examples of mands.</td>
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<td>3-17</td>
<td>Define and provide examples of tacts.</td>
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<td>3-18</td>
<td>Define and provide examples of intraverbals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-19</td>
<td>Define and provide examples of contingency-shaped and rule governed behavior and distinguish between examples of each.</td>
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### Content Area 9: Behavior Change Procedures

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<tr>
<th>TASK #</th>
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<tr>
<td>9-25</td>
<td>Use language acquisition programs that employ Skinner’s analysis of verbal behavior (i.e., echoics, mands, tacts, intraverbals).</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-26</td>
<td>Use language acquisition/communication training procedures.</td>
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