BEHV 5330

Verbal Behavior & the Analysis of Human Behavior
Credits: 03

Department of Behavior Analysis
The University of North Texas

Fall, 2010

PROFESSOR: Traci Cihon, PhD, BCBA-D

PROFESSOR CONTACT INFORMATION:
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Wednesdays 12 pm to 2 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 purpose 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 reinforced via 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 that will be used as guides for Interteaching discussions. The units for the course are listed at the end of the syllabus. The reading objectives are available on the course website (https://ecampus.unt.edu/webct/logon/3557159226171).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES & EVALUATION

Interteaching

The course will be run using a modified Interteaching format (c.f., Boyce & Hineline, 2002). Following the first class session, students will be required to complete the Reading Objectives for the corresponding unit. Students should bring their prepared responses to class. During class, students will divide into pairs to discuss the material from the readings. Approximately two-thirds of the class time will be spent in these discussion pairs. Each week, students should select new partners (or persons with whom they have not worked before). At the end of the Interteaching session, students will fill out a brief record sheet where they will evaluate their peer’s performance and note any reading objectives that need further clarification or any additional questions or discussion points that remain unsettled following the Interteaching session. At the start of the subsequent class session, the course instructor will deliver a brief, clarifying lecture informed by the information detailed in the prior week’s record sheets. Students can accumulate up to 200 points with the Interteaching component of the course.

Online Tutorial

Students will complete an online tutorial that has been structured in a format consistent with the personalized system of instruction (PSI; cf., Keller, 1968). The online tutorial covers the basic concepts and ideas that will serve as the building blocks that will allow for more in-depth discussion of the material. Suggested completion dates for the specific units in the online tutorial are noted on the course schedule at the end of the syllabus. The online tutorial can be accessed at www.FoxyLearning.com. Upon purchasing the tutorial, students should “connect” to the course. This can be accomplished, after creating an account, by going to the ‘myLearning’ section and clicking on ‘the connect a course’ button. Satisfactory completion of the online tutorial will be worth 65 points.

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 5 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 from 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 this 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
See All Fast Minute Each Day Shuffle (SAFMEDS) is an instructional tool that allows students to become both fast and accurate with a variety of course content including basic concepts and terms and definitions (cf., Eshleman, 1985). SAFMEDS will be used to assist students in identifying the controlling variables and corresponding definitions for various vocabulary associated with the topic of verbal behavior. 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

**Research Application Papers**

Each student will select two research articles; one article should focus on mand and/or tact relations and the other on the intraverbal relation (the instructor will allow articles that focus on other operants but the student must gain approval before choosing an article). The research application assignments 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). Each research application assignment will be worth 70 points.

**Literature Review/VB Extension Analysis (final paper)**

Each student will prepare a literature review pertaining to a particular verbal operant or an extension of Skinner’s (1957) analysis of verbal behavior. Students choosing the literature review may select from the following verbal operants: mands, tacts, echoics, or intraverbals. Students choosing the VB extension analysis may choose from: stimulus equivalence as it pertains to verbal behavior, relational frame theory, naming, or verbal behavior developmental theory. There is not page limit for the final paper, as the length will vary with respect to the extension or operant of interest. Students are free to organize the paper in the best way that fits their topic and are encouraged to discuss their paper with the instructor at several points throughout the semester. Each paper should include a minimum of ten references and be in Times New Roman, 12 pt font, and be formatted according to APA style requirements. The final paper will be worth 100 points.

**COURSE GRADES**

Interteaching = 200 points
- Reading Objectives 10 @ 10 pts each = 100 points
- Discussion & Record Sheets 10 @ 10 points each = 100 points

Short Essays = 7 @ 5 pts each = 35 points

Research Application Papers = 2 @ 50 pts = 100 points
Online Tutorial = 65 points
SAFMEDS = 50 points
Final Paper = 100 points
Total Points = 550 points

GRADE EQUIVALENTS (% of 550 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

ACCOMMODATIONS 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)**


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| 1 | **August 30, 2010**  
Course Introduction; Review Syllabus  
**Readings:** Eshleman (1991); Marcon-Dawson et al. (2009); Petursdottir et al. (2009) |
| 2 | **September 6, 2010**  
**NO CLASS**  
**LABOR DAY** |
| 2 | **September 13, 2010**  
**Interteaching:** *Unit 1:* Functional Analysis of Verbal Behavior  
**Reading:** Skinner Chapters 1 & 2  
**Short Essay 1** |
| 3 | **September 20, 2010**  
**Interteaching:** *Unit 2:* Responses to Skinner’s (1957) *Verbal Behavior*  
**Reading:** Chomsky (1959); MacCorquodale (1970)  
**Online Tutorial:** Suggested completion, Lessons 1-10  
**Short Essay 2** |
| 4 | **September 27, 2010**  
**Interteaching:** *Unit 3:* Mands I  
**Reading:** Skinner Chapter 3 |
| 5 | **October 4, 2010**  
**Interteaching:** *Unit 3 (cont.):* Mands II  
**Reading:** Michael (1988); Shafer (1994)  
**Online Tutorial:** Suggested completion, Lesson 18 |
| 6 | **October 11, 2010**  
**Interteaching:** *Unit 4:* Echoics, textuals, transcription, & intraverbals  
**Reading:** Skinner Chapter 4; Axe (2008); Cihon (2007); Michael (1982)  
**Short Essay 3** |
| 7 | **October 18, 2010**  
**Interteaching:** *Unit 4 (cont.):* Echoics, textuals, transcription, & intraverbals II  
**Reading:** Skinner Chapter 4; Axe (2008); Cihon (2007); Michael (1982); Vargas (1982)  
**Online Tutorial:** Suggested completion, Lessons 11-16, 21 |
| 8 | **October 25, 2010**  
**Interteaching:** *Unit 5:* Tacts I  
**Reading:** Skinner Chapter 5  
**Short Essay 4** |
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Interteaching:</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
<th>Online Tutorial:</th>
<th>Due: <strong>RESEARCH APPLICATION PAPER</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>9 November 1</td>
<td><strong>Unit 5 (cont.): Tacts II</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unit 5 (cont.): Tacts II</strong></td>
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<td>10 November 8</td>
<td><strong>Unit 6: Audience Control</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unit 6: Audience Control</strong></td>
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<td>11 November 15</td>
<td><strong>Unit 7: Multiple Control I</strong></td>
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<td>12 November 22</td>
<td><strong>Unit 7 (cont.): Multiple Control II</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unit 7 (cont.): Multiple Control II</strong></td>
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<td>13 November 29</td>
<td><strong>Unit 8: Autoclitics</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unit 8: Autoclitics</strong></td>
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<td>14 December 6</td>
<td><strong>Unit 9: Verbal Operants as a Unit of Analysis; Palmer video</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unit 9: Verbal Operants as a Unit of Analysis; Palmer video</strong></td>
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<td>15 December 13</td>
<td><strong>Unit 10: Students’ Choice</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**

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2-7 2 Interpret articles from the behavior analytic literature.

**Content Area 3: Principles, Processes And Concepts**

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3-15 Define and provide examples of echoics and imitation.
3-16 Define and provide examples of mands.
3-17 Define and provide examples of tacts.
3-18 Define and provide examples of intraverbals.
3-19 Define and provide examples of contingency-shaped and rule governed behavior and distinguish between examples of each.

**Content Area 9: Behavior Change Procedures**

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9-25 Use language acquisition programs that employ Skinner’s analysis of verbal behavior (i.e., echoics, mands, tacts, intraverbals).
9-26 Use language acquisition/communication training procedures.
References

