BEHV 5330

Verbal Behavior & the Analysis of Human Behavior
Credits: 03

Department of Behavior Analysis
The University of North Texas

Fall, 2014

PROFESSOR: Traci Cihon, PhD, BCBA-D

PROFESSOR CONTACT INFORMATION:
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Office Hours: by appointment

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COURSE TIME: Thursday 6:00 pm to 8:50 pm (Gateway: Sage 142)

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 and 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 and analyze multiply-controlled verbal operants and extensions of Skinner’s analysis. Students will read current research and conceptual pieces informed by Skinner’s analysis and determine how it has impacted our understanding of verbal behavior and language.

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
LEARNING ACTIVITIES & EVALUATION

Interteaching
The course will be run using a modified Interteaching format (e.g., 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 72 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 30 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: Define and describe the critical features of 1) methodological behaviorism and 2) radical behaviorism. Indicated which form of behaviorism you identify with and describe why. Please conclude with 1-2 sentences explaining how you believe your choice to identify as a methodological or radical behaviorist will affect how you will respond to the subject matter of this course.
*Short Essay 2: 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 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: Explain the multiple control in this pun; that is, the critical term or phrase and the main thematic source:
   Like a tree, I believe I will leave.

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.

Special Project: Epic Rap Battle or White Board Animation
In the second week of class, you will be grouped in either dyads or triads and you will be given your topic for the Epic Rap Battle Video/Live Performance or White Board Animation Activity. Each group can choose whether or not to create an Epic Rap Battle (see http://www.epicrapbattlesofhistory.com/ for examples) or White Board Animation (see www.powtoon.com or http://open-sankore.org/ for examples and free software) for their topic. Either product should last no longer than 5 min in duration. You will be expected to include at least six additional citations to those suggested for your topic, to present the critical features of each person’s contribution to the understanding of behaviorism or language, present a debate of sorts from the perspective of each person, and provide a transcript of your project that includes all of the citations in APA style. A rubric for grading is on the BlackBoard site for the course; however, in general you will
be graded on content, quality and inclusion of citations, APA style for your reference page, scope and accuracy of content, and creativity/clarity. This project is worth 25 points of your course grade.

Here are some articles/chapters to get you started on your assigned topic:

**Skinner & Watson**


**Skinner & Chomsky**


**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. SAFMEDS checkouts will be conducted each week beginning the second week of class. Checkouts will be conducted at the end of class with your interteaching partner. Students will checkout with a 1-min timing and will log each checkout (students can use the SCC to track their progress if they prefer). The goal for the final checkout is 20 correct responses per
minute, with the pinpointed learning channel being: see term/say definition. Once students reach their frequency aim, they are excused from subsequent weekly checkouts.

Twenty-five total points are available for the SAFMEDS checkouts. Points will be awarded based on the following criteria and students have until the last week of the course to meet their aim.

- 20+ cpm: 25 points
- 15-19 cpm: 12 points
- 10-14 cpm: 6 points
- 5-9 cpm: 3 points
- 4 or less cpm: 1.5 points

cpm = correct responses per minute

**SAFMEDS Alternative Assignment**

Students who would prefer not to use SAFMEDS as a study tool can earn their 50 points by completing an alternative assignment. Students interested in this option should first read Meindl et al. (2013) and construct a brief summary of the article. Then, students interested in this option will create a second set of SAFMEDS to parallel the deck provided in this course. The student created terms and definitions should maintain the critical features of the definitions in the instructor provided SAFMEDS, maintain brevity in the alternative definitions, and include a “matched” card for at least 25 of the cards in the instructor provided deck. One point will be awarded for each student created card that fits the aforementioned criteria (25 possible points).

**Research Application Papers**

Each student will select two research articles; one article should focus on mand relations and the other on the tact or intraverbal relations (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 25 points.

**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 any topic covered in class (or may select a topic that
was not covered in class with permission of the instructor). Students choosing the VB extension analysis may choose from: stimulus equivalence as it pertains to verbal behavior, relational frame theory, naming, joint control, or verbal behavior developmental theory. There is no page limit for the final paper, as the length will vary with respect to the extension, research proposal topic, 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. Students will be required to select a topic and a thesis by the eight week of the semester. Topics and theses should either be turned in to the instructor or students should schedule a meeting with the instructor during that week to discuss topic and thesis selections. 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. Final papers will be evaluated as if they were undergoing review for publication in a professional, peer-reviewed journal. The final paper will be worth 100 points. Students who choose to complete a literature review or an extension analysis will receive final grades based on the following mock editorial decisions: No Revisions Necessary (100 pts), Accept with Minor Revisions (90 pts), Accept with Major Revisions (75 pts), Reject with an Invitation to Resubmit (60 pts), or Reject (50 pts).

COURSE GRADES
Interteaching = 72 points
   Reading Objectives 9 @ 3 pts each = 27 points
   Discussion & Record Sheets 9 @ 5 points each = 45 points
Short Essays = 7 @ 5 pts each = 35 points
Special Project = 35 points
Research Application Papers = 2 @ 25 pts = 50 points
Online Tutorial = 30 points
SAFMEDS/SAFMEDS Alternative = 25 points
Final Paper = 100 points
Total Points = 347 points

GRADE EQUIVALENTS (% of 347 points earned):
A: 90% to 100%    B: 80% to 89%    C: 70% to 79%    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 Sage Hall (room 167) or call them 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**


Technology requirements
An active UNT email account, a computer or access to a computer and on-line access to course web site on Blackboard Learn (https://learn.unt.edu/). 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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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| August 28, 2014 | Review Syllabus; Course Introduction  
Short Essay 1 |
| 1  
September 4, 2014 | Unit 1: Introduction to Social Behavior and Verbal Behavior*  
**Readings:** Skinner (1953) Chapter 19 & Skinner (1957) Chapters 1&2  
**Online Tutorial:** Suggested completion, Lessons 1-10  
**Short Essay 2**  
*There will not be Interteachng this week.* |
| September 11, 2014 | **NO CLASS**  
Work on Special Project |
| September 18, 2014 | **NO CLASS**  
Work on Special Project |
| 2  
September 25, 2014 | Interteaching: Unit 2: Current Status of Behavior Analysis and Verbal Behavior  
**Reading:** Eshleman (1991); Marcon-Dawson et al. (2009); Petursdottir et al. (2009)  
**Special Project Student Presentations/Performances** |
| 3  
October 2, 2014 | Interteaching: Unit 3: Mands  
**Reading:** Skinner (1953) Chapter 5, pp. 76-90 and Chapter 9; Skinner (1957) Chapter 3; Miguel (2013);  
**Online Tutorial:** Suggested completion, Lesson 18 |
| 4  
October 9, 2014 | Interteaching: Unit 4: Verbal Behavior Under the Control of Verbal Stimuli  
**Reading:** Skinner (1957) Chapter 4; Michael (1982); Sundberg & Sundberg (2011); Eikesith & Smith (2013)  
**Online Tutorial:** Suggested completion, Lessons 11-16, 21  
**Short Essay 3**  
Due: **RESEARCH APPLICATION PAPER** (mands) |
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Interteaching:</th>
<th>Reading:</th>
<th>Online Tutorial:</th>
<th>Short Essay</th>
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<tr>
<td>October 16, 2014</td>
<td><strong>Unit 5: Tacts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skinner (1957) Chapter 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suggested completion, Lessons 17, 19, 22-32</strong></td>
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<td>October 23, 2013</td>
<td><strong>Unit 6: Audience Control</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skinner (1957) Chapters 6 &amp; 7</strong>; Skinner (1989); Schlinger (2008); Silverman et al. (1986)</td>
<td><strong>Suggested completion, Lesson 20</strong></td>
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<td>October 30, 2014</td>
<td><strong>Unit 7: Multiple Causation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skinner (1953) Chapter 14</strong>; Skinner (1957) Chapters 9, 10, &amp; 11; Michael, Palmer, &amp; Sundberg (2011)</td>
<td><strong>Suggested completion, Lessons 33-44</strong></td>
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<td>November 13, 2014</td>
<td><strong>Unit 9: Verbal Operants as a Unit of Analysis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skinner (1957) Chapter 8</strong>; Normand (2009); Palmer (2008)</td>
<td><strong>RESEARCH APPLICATION PAPER</strong> (intraverbs or tacts)</td>
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<td>November 20, 2014</td>
<td><strong>Unit 10: The Production of VB</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skinner (1957) Chapters 15-17 &amp; 19</strong></td>
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<td>November 27, 2014</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thanksgiving</strong></td>
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<td>December 4, 2014</td>
<td><strong>Clarifying Lecture: Unit 10</strong></td>
<td><strong>DUE:</strong> <strong>SAFMEDS checkouts/Alternative Assignments</strong> <strong>FINAL PAPER</strong></td>
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<td>December 11, 2014</td>
<td><strong>Unit 11</strong>: Closing Comments on the Future of Verbal Behavior</td>
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<td><strong>Reading</strong>: Fryling (2013); Greer &amp; Ross (2004); Horne &amp; Lowe (1996); Horne et al. (2004); Vargas (2013)</td>
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*The professor has 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*
References


