

E-mail: mofsowitz@monroecc.edu

Office Hours: see my web site ("find me" page)

Web site: <http://web.monroecc.edu/mofsowitz/>

Office location: 5-402

Textbooks:

First Course in Applied Behavior Analysis Paul Chance (2006).

Behavior Modification:

(3 credit hours; prerequisite PSY 101): "A study of the principles of conditioning and learning as applied to practical approaches of behavior management and change. Special attention will be given to behavior change in institutional and personal settings. Self-regulation and cognitive-behavioral techniques will also be discussed."

In other words, **behavior modification** teaches us about the processes of creating and changing behaviors (in others or in oneself), as these processes have been discovered and refined by psychologists in the broader field of "learning." The focus will be on applying principles of learning and conditioning to the formation of new behaviors, to the elimination of existing unwanted behaviors, and to the alteration of existing behaviors. We'll see that *behavior* refers to many aspects of a person's (or any animal's) mannerisms (ranging from the old and simple finger-in-the-nose to more complex activities like argumentative habits), but not to all aspects (one's intelligence, for example).

A word of warning: The topic is fun, and there should be plenty of opportunities for applying the material to your own life (or that of someone you have access to). But it also requires that you learn the theories underlying behavior modification, that is, the principles of learning and conditioning. You were already exposed to these principles in your introductory psychology course (in the section on learning), but we'll go into them in much more detail than you experienced in the introductory course.

General purpose and objectives:

The *objectives* of this course are twofold: one, to introduce you to the fields of behavior modification and the psychology of learning, and two, to contribute to the larger puzzle that is your general education. If you develop a good grasp of the materials presented in this course you should be able to understand some of the basic components underlying the processes of behavior modification and the methods used in the field; you should also be able to apply the knowledge to your own life or to people and pets in your life. You should come to understand the theories of learning and conditioning that serve as the backbone for the analysis of behavior and the application of modification techniques. You should then be able to use these theories wherever an application is possible. If you work hard in this class and put thought into the topics you should also come away with an improved general ability to research and think about college-level subjects, and perhaps you'll also develop an altered view of your life in the world and the habits of others.

The departmental **Course Learning Outcomes** state that successful students should be able to:

- identify and describe the basic principles of operant conditioning, respondent (classical) conditioning, and observational learning;
- summarize data collection methods used in behavior modification, and operationally apply data collection procedures to behavior modification programs;
- demonstrate behavioral techniques used to teach new behaviors;
- illustrate and prepare behavior modification plans to increase or decrease existing behaviors; and
- summarize ethical considerations associated with conducting behavior modification on various populations.

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OUTLINE OF LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS:

*(The dates shown below refer to the start of each week only. "Chapter," listed next to topics, refers to assigned readings in the textbook. Quizzes will generally be on Thursdays of each week where listed. Please read all material **prior** to the day's class.)*

- Week one (9/8):** An introduction to behavior modification (**chapter 1**).
- Week two (9/15):** What is behavior, and how is it measured? (**chapter 2 through p. 65**)
- Week three (9/22):** The central role of reinforcement in acquiring behaviors (**chapter 3**).
- Week four (9/29):** More on reinforcements (**pp. 329-333**) and **First quiz**.
- Week five (10/6):** Behavioral antecedents: prompts and the idea of stimulus control (**chapter 4**).
- Week six (10/13):** Complex training: shaping and chaining (**chapter 5**). **Second quiz**.
- Week seven (10/20):** Does it work? How to evaluate a behavior modification plan (**pp. 65-84 + 87-90**).
Ridding behaviors I: extinction and differential reinforcement (**chapter 6**).
- Week eight (10/27):** Ridding behaviors II: punishment (**chapter 7**). **Third quiz**.
- Week nine (11/3):** Discrimination training (**chapter 8**).
- Week ten (11/10):** Generalization (**chapter 9**). **Fourth quiz**.
- Week eleven (11/17):** Maintaining the new behavior over time (**chapter 10**).
- Week twelve (11/24):** The ethics of applied behavior analysis (**chapter 12**). **Fifth quiz**.
- THANKSGIVING (no class on Thursday)**
- Week thirteen (12/1):** Respondent conditioning (**chapter 11**).
- Week fourteen (12/8):** Cognitive behavior and its modification (**additional readings**).
- Week fifteen (12/15):** Wrap up and review (**chapter 13**). **Sixth quiz**.

Grades:

There will be six quizzes (usually given at the start of class *every other Thursday* beginning with our fourth class week) each containing two 5-point essay questions and a 5-point set of short definition/identification questions; your best 15 (of the 18 possible 0-5 point) scores will provide your total quiz grade, which is worth **50%** of the final course grade; you may make-up a missed quiz only once – all other missed quizzes are final. See page 3 of this syllabus for quiz point-grade conversion details. Two formal papers worth **15% each**, and a series of homework assignments worth **20% total**. You'll need a total grade of "90" for an A-, "80" for a B-, "70" for a C-, and so on when all is completed.

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The writing assignments will be detailed in class. There will be two formal writing assignments and you will have options on each of them (though mostly they will consist of applications of the methods and principles learned in class). The following guidelines apply to all assignments.

Formal assignments should be 750 - 1250 words in length each. All assignments will be graded for thought content, clarity, and English (grammar, syntax, spelling, organization, etc.). *All assignments (including homework) should be typed or submitted electronically.* Computers are available for your use at the MCC Electronic Learning Center. Papers should be double-spaced, neatly ordered, and stapled together. See the tips for writing at the end of this syllabus. If you're not in class you may submit assignments by E-mail as attached documents (RTF, Word, PDF, or Open Office; *not* Works); see my E-mail address on page one.

If you are not satisfied with the grade on the term paper or homework, you may rewrite it and hand in an improved version. The rewritten work is eligible for a maximum one letter grade improvement (i.e., a change in grade is not guaranteed, and the maximum improvement will be one full letter, such as from B- to A-, or on homework from P to P+), however, I will not provide comments or justifications for the rewritten work. (This option does not apply to tests, and you forfeit this option on late assignments. Rewrites are due within one week after you get your graded assignment back.)

Assignments turned in late will be devalued one-third of a grade (e.g., from B to B-) for each class period, and are ineligible for rewriting (for a grade change). However, due-date extensions can be given for consecutive *excused* absences.

A note on the bi-weekly quizzes. Each completed quiz answer will receive a numerical score from zero through five points. Your 15 best answers will be used to calculate your total quiz grade based on the following scale:

71 or more = A+	55-59 = B+	40-44 = C+	25-29 = D+	
64-70 = A	50-54 = B	35-39 = C	20-24 = D	
60-63 = A-	45-49 = B-	30-34 = C-	15-19 = D-	14.5 or less = F

(Anyone using documented testing accommodations must inform me one week before the quiz.)

For return of your final quiz and last homework assignment, bring a self-addressed, stamped envelope (large enough to hold whatever you wish returned).

Michael S. Ofsowitz:

Born and raised here in the Rochester area. Studied psychology and sociology at The University of North Carolina-Charlotte, before going to Tulane University (New Orleans) for graduate study in social psychology. I joined Monroe Community College in the Fall, 2002, and spent 13 of the preceding years teaching to (mostly) Americans in Europe (in military environments) with the University of Maryland. I teach psychology (intro, social psych, behavior mod, superstitions, development) and have taught sociology (intro, social problems, social psych, self, American society). I'm recently widowed, have one child (a son), enjoy French food, forests, and comedy. I'm an assistant professor here at MCC. Feel free to call me anything polite (Mike, Michael, Mr. Ofsowitz, professor, or "teach"; ... just about anything but "sir"). I have a web site at <http://web.monroecc.edu/mofsowitz>.

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The fine print

A note on attendance, absences, and make-ups:

I take attendance at the *start* of class, and it shows me that you're interested enough in class to be here. There's no official attendance policy and your grade isn't based on attendance, but if you ever need a break or are on the borderline between two grades, you'll want me to think that you're interested in class and are trying, and attendance helps send that message. If you're in class but sleeping, or playing with your phone, you are not really there, and I may count you absent. If you miss class, you should find out from other students what went on. Ask them for copies of notes, detailed explanations of the material, or, if available, tape recordings. Be willing to help your fellow students, too. I'm available to clarify any problems you might have understanding course material or assignments whether or not you were absent, but I won't provide reviews for missed classes. Due to the nature of the course, any absence may lead to lower grades. If you miss class on a test/quiz day you *must* have a valid excuse and *must* contact me. Make-up tests must be completed within one week from the original test date, unless valid excuses (medical emergency, business travel, military deployment) keep you from returning to the classroom. (Such absences require documentation.) I'm not good about returning calls, but you may leave messages, or try to contact me "live" at 292-3223; I do reply to E-mail. If you miss the final exam and fail to contact me by the weekend immediately following the exam, anything can happen to your grade; an incomplete is not a default.

Incomplete (grade of I):

The grade of I, or incomplete, is available for special cases where the student is unable to finish the course by the scheduled end of the term. To receive an I, students who are having problems finishing the course as scheduled must fulfill the following requirements: 1) 60% of the graded assignments must be completed at the time of the request; 2) 60% of the class sessions must have been attended by the end of the course; 3) the student must provide evidence of a valid reason for not finishing the graded assignments by the end of the course; 4) the student must request an incomplete in writing, prior to the last day of the course, and this request must include the reason for the extension and a date by which the work for the course will be completed (which should not exceed one week from the expiration of the reason for the I). Granting the grade of I, and setting a date for its completion remain at the total discretion of the instructor. For students who are unable to finish the course as scheduled, alternatives to the grade of I include the W (withdrawal, see below) and the F (failure).

Plagiarism and cheating:

Plagiarism is academic dishonesty. In other words, it's a big word for cheating. If you're caught plagiarizing, or cheating in some other form, you may wind up failing the assignment and being reported to the college. The Psychology Department's policy on plagiarism, available in the "courses" folder of the M-drive, describes the conditions that define plagiarism for this course. The most common form of plagiarism is using someone else's work as if it were your own. That is, by copying the *work* of another person and presenting that work as if *you* wrote it, you are plagiarizing. To avoid plagiarism you should learn how to paraphrase and how to use *quotation marks*. If you put someone else's *ideas* into *your own words* (and not just a rearrangement of the original words) you don't need the quotation marks but you still need to cite your source. Citing your source is necessary, but often not sufficient to avoid plagiarism.

Under no circumstances should you ever use the work of a fellow student in any of your written work. You must write your own product. Anything else is down-right cheating.

I highly recommend that you get an English manual of some sort to help you avoid some of the common mistakes that result in accusations of plagiarism. *Diana Hacker's Pocket Style Manual* is one such guidebook. I also have a web page at <http://web.monroecc.edu/manila/webfiles/mofsowitz/plag.html> that will be of help.

Respect:

- **Don't make unnecessary noise in the classroom, or use a phone during class. Really. Nothing bugs me more than to see you playing with your cell phone while I'm teaching, and nothing bugs your classmates more than you making noise while they're trying to listen to something else.**
- Try to be patient with fellow students and assume they have good intentions. They're not all as bright as you, obviously ☺. And listen to what they're saying.
- Don't dominate discussions: allow time for others, who might be shier than you, to respond.
- We're playing with ideas in class, so don't assume people believe what they're talking about.
- Take a joke, but don't insult anyone (or at least insult everyone equally and in good taste).
- Treat the classroom as a confidential situation, and don't gossip about it.
- Speak in the first person; recognize that your opinions are your own and that you don't speak for others.
- Be nice (respect others), try to learn something (respect college), and take responsibility for your future (respect yourself). If need be, at least fake it, and consider it a professional responsibility.

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Quirks about the way I grade:

A checkmark (✓) is a good sign. It means “yes,” or “right,” or “good.” If I actually write “good,” I really mean it; I use superlatives (“great paper,” “excellent”) as rarely as I use my cell phone (which I usually can’t even find). On the whole, when I grade your written work, I point out weaknesses and errors in the optimistic hope that you’ll learn to correct them in the future. It also expresses my assumption that your self-esteem is not so important, or so fragile that it’ll crush under the weight of a short series of corrections from a college teacher. Actually, I’d like nothing better than to give you good grades. I’d bet your doctor would like nothing better than to report good health. Like your physician, though, I’m duty bound to inform you of problems and deficiencies; use the information wisely.

Withdrawals:

To withdraw from this course, pick up a withdrawal form at the Registration Office. After completing the form, come discuss the withdrawal with me and get my signature. Return the withdrawal form to the Registration Office, Counseling Center at Brighton, or the Student Center at Damon. You will then receive a grade of “W” for the course.

You should not assume that failing to attend class will result in an automatic withdrawal from a course. Your non-attendance may result in a grade of F and thus jeopardize your average. However, I might withdraw you from the class if you stop coming.

Learning Centers:

Monroe Community College has a number of Learning Centers at Brighton (for example, Accounting, Math, Psychology, Writing, the Electronic Learning Center, etc.) and at Damon (for example, the Integrated Learning Center, Electronic Learning Center, etc.). Learning centers are staffed with instructional personnel and may be equipped with computers and software to assist students.

It is recommended that you use the Learning Centers to get additional help with concepts learned in the classroom and with homework. Please refer to your MCC student email to review your referral and objectives for your use of the Learning Center(s).

The Writing Center at Brighton is located in 11-208; it accepts walk-in and appointment sessions. If your writing is at all weak, I *highly* recommend that you make use of the tutoring services at the Writing Center. It’s there to help you. Watch the feedback I give you on homework assignments: I might refer you to the Writing Center, and I expect you to go there for tutoring if I do. If you have broader reading, study habit, or language problems, I recommend the Interdisciplinary Learning Center in 11-211. The Electronic Learning Center is located in room 11-106.

Emergency closings:

If the College is **closed** due to inclement weather or some other emergency, all Rochester area radio and television stations will be notified no later than 5:30 a.m. In addition, the homepage on the MCC website (www.monroecc.edu) will display a message indicating the College is closed. Please do not call the College to avoid overloading the telephone lines.

Class cancellation information is available daily on the web or through the telephone. Simply go to the MCC website (www.monroecc.edu) and under the “Quick Links” window on the homepage click on “Class Cancellations.” Additionally, class cancellation information is available by dialing 292-2066, press “1” for the Brighton campus or “2” for the Damon campus. If possible, please use the web as there could be delays in the voice recordings based on the number of cancellations.

SOME TIPS FOR WRITING ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

1. Always *think* before writing. Don't write a paper without thinking first. Jot down your ideas, then sort through them; discard those of little value, and arrange the others in some logical order, using an outline for organization.
2. Avoid *plagiarism* at all costs. When you copy words, an idea, or other information from another source, you *must* give credit to the original source. Failure to give credit for ideas, information, or words is called plagiarism, and may lead to failure on the assignment, or if intentional and repeated, failure in the course. (When you use the exact same words as you find in another source, such as a textbook, use quotation marks ["..."] in your paper around the copied selection when the selection is three successive words or more. If you alter the exact wording only a little, you can be in big trouble, so either copy exactly and quote, or paraphrase cleanly.) See tip five, below, for sources showing you how to give credit where credit is due, and also the "PLAGIARISM" link on my web site.
3. Begin your essay with a clear introduction. Your introduction should do two things: 1) it should introduce *the reader* to the topic, clarifying whatever concepts you introduce; and 2) it should show *the reader* what your intentions are for the remainder of the paper. End the essay with a conclusion that summarizes the paper, and draws it to a natural, clean close.
4. Be clear about what you are writing. Clarity demands that you understand what you are talking about and that you communicate it to a reader who is not reading your mind, but is reading your writing. A terse style, or one using terminology carelessly, does not make for clear writing. Also, try avoiding wordy phrases. If necessary, work on your use of punctuation, past and present tense problems, the active voice, and other aspects of the English essay (see point 5).
5. Use an English handbook to learn what you need to learn about basic writing mechanics. In addition to the rules, they show plenty of examples. Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual* is a good source, as is the *Harbrace College Handbook*, Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, the *American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual*, the *Chicago Manual of Style* and other such sources (including <http://www.refdesk.com/factgram.html>). Use a dictionary *and* spell-check for spelling and a thesaurus to improve your vocabulary. Visit the Writing Learning Center for tutoring.
6. Avoid sexist or biased language. Find substitutes for "he or she," s/he, he/she, his/her, etc. (For example, rewrite to form a plural.) Use unbiased phrases when referring to different types of people (no "damn Commies" when you should use "Russians"). Be polite to groups of people.
7. *Proofread* what you've written. Once you're down to your final draft (which should not be your first or even second draft, but maybe your *third* or *tenth*), give it a final, careful proof. Make corrections on the final draft in pencil before you turn it in. If you find too many errors, rewrite once more.
8. Double-space everything. This means using a 2-line spread for a 12-point font. (And use an 11 or 12-point font; nothing too small (8) or too large (14). An 11-point Times New Roman is usually a good choice.) Do *not* add empty spaces between paragraphs as in a business letter. *Indent* the start of each *paragraph* half an inch. Leave margins around the entire text of the paper (about 1" – 1.5"). Do *not* align the text to the right margin of the paper (don't "right-justify" or "full justify").
9. Number all the pages in the upper-right corner, flush with the right margin. It's good habit to follow the APA style of providing a condensed title to your pages, just to the left of the page number in the upper-right corner. The condensed title is a short version of your paper's title.
10. In my classes only: you don't need a cover sheet or title page. Make sure your name appears somewhere on your paper. Staple the pages together yourself (don't ask me to do it for you; I'm not your secretary). No plastic folders! Paper (e.g., manila) folders are acceptable.
11. **Follow the guidelines above!**