

## Psychology of Learning

**Instructor:** Dr. Claudia Stanny

**Class Meets:** 9:00 AM - 9:50 AM Monday, Wednesday, Friday  
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**Office Hours:** 10 AM - noon Monday, Wednesday, & Friday

### Required Text:

Purdy, J. E., Markham, M. R., Schwartz, B. L., & Gordon, W. C. (2001). *Learning and memory* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

### PREREQUISITE COURSE: PSY 2012

### COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

It is preferred that the student has had several other psychology courses.

### Description of Course Topics

This course will survey theories of learning, memory, and cognitive processes, including both human and nonhuman research. Topics include classical and instrumental conditioning; information processing models of attention and memory; factors involved in the acquisition, retention, and retrieval of information; language; and species-specific aspects of learning. Students will attain an understanding of the development and present status of theories of learning, memory, and cognitive processes. In addition, they will gain some experience with research methods through readings, demonstrations, and in-class experiments.

### Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course should exhibit competence in the following areas:

Explain the role of learning as an adaptive mechanism.

Describe and distinguish between the behavioral and cognitive approaches to understanding learning and memory.

Describe the various research methods used to develop models of conditioning and memory.

Describe how researchers use empirical data to evaluate their models of learning and memory.

Describe the constraints imposed by biology on the nature of learning observed in different species.

Identify brain structures that are involved with mechanisms of conditioning or the encoding or retrieval of memories.

Identify the major mechanisms by which experience alters behavior and produces learning and memory.

Identify and describe the components of the memory system.

Explain the role of encoding and retrieval mechanisms in successful memory function.

Explain how principles of learning (conditioning) and memory can be used to alter one's own behavior or improve one's ability to learn and remember events or new knowledge.

Evaluate the limitations of memory accuracy. Describe the mechanisms that contribute to distortions and inaccuracies in memory recollection.

### In-Class Writing Assignments

I want to encourage students to read the material before coming to class and to think about their reading.

From time to time I will present brief question in class for a 5-minute writing assignment. You **must** be in class to complete these assignments. They can not be made up if you are absent. Each In-Class Writing Assignment is worth 2 points. Satisfactory assignments (✓) will earn 2 points. Unusually well-written or insightful assignments (✓+) will earn a bonus point (3 points total). Writing that indicates poor preparation or need for improvement (✓-) will earn 1 point. If you are absent or do not turn in an assignment, you will receive zero points. Your grade for In-class Writing assignments will consist of a percentage of the points your writing earned divided by 2 times the number of writing assignments given in class.

### UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Honesty in our academic work is vital, and we will not knowingly act in ways which erode that integrity. Accordingly, we pledge not to cheat, nor to tolerate cheating, nor to plagiarize the work of others. (UWF Student Handbook, page 46).

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and will be taken seriously. Please refer to the UWF Student Handbook (page 48) for information about procedures that will be followed with cases of academic dishonesty.

### ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with special needs who require specific accommodations for examinations or other course activities should contact Barbara Fitzpatrick, Director of Disabled Student Services (DSS) (e-mail: [dss@uwf.edu](mailto:dss@uwf.edu), telephone: 474-2387). DSS will provide the student with a letter for the instructor that will specify recommended accommodations.

### Exams and Grading

Exams will be administered on the dates indicated in the schedule of readings and exams. Make-up exams will be permitted *only* in case of *serious illness* (that is, one that requires consultation with a physician). Should you miss an exam due to serious illness, you **must contact me no later than the first class meeting following the exam**. Make-up exams must be taken within **one week** of the exam date. You must bring documentation for your absence on the regular exam date. Only one make-up exam will be permitted per student during the term. Students will not be allowed to answer the bonus question when making up an exam.

Students who receive prior approval to miss an exam for a **University approved function** will be permitted to make up the exam, but **must** make arrangements to do so **before the exam date**. These exams must also be taken within one week of the exam date.

There will be **four (4) exams**. Each exam will contain approximately 50 multiple choice questions based on material from lectures and readings. These exams are one-hour exams that will test material covered in the interval following the last exam.

Scores on each exam will be based on a percentage of the highest score in the class. This system corrects for the difficulty of exams and imposes no preconceived distribution on letter grades. Percent scores are computed as follows:

$$\text{Your Percent Score} = \frac{\text{number correct on your exam}}{\text{number correct on best exam}} \times 100\%$$

An optional short essay question (the bonus question) will be included on each exam. Students who answer the bonus question can earn up to 5 additional percentage points on their exam. These points are added to the percent score computed for the exam. **Only students who take the exam at the scheduled time will be allowed to answer the bonus question.**

Final grades will be based on the combination of exam grades and the grade for the in-class written assignments. Scores will be weighted as follows:

Class exams (4)	90% for average of exam scores (22.5% per exam)
In-Class Written Assignments	10%

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

93% or better	A	77% to 79%	C +
90% to 92%	A -	73% to 76%	C
87% to 89%	B +	70% to 72%	C -
83% to 86%	B	60% to 69%	D
80% to 82%	B -	50% or less	F

### Class Attendance

I do not take attendance. However, performance on exams is strongly correlated with attendance. Students who expect to do well in the course should also expect to attend class regularly. In addition, students who have read the material before class benefit most from attending class. Reading the text first provides an overview of the topics that will be covered and allows you to be selective while taking notes during class. (You will know, for example, that the procedures of an experiment discussed in class have been described in detail in the text and you need not record all of these details while taking class notes.) Exams are based primarily on topics discussed in class. Attending lectures will clarify material presented in the text and will help you identify those topics I consider most important. Lectures will also include some material that has not been discussed in the text but you will be expected to know. Finally, regular attendance will ensure that you are present for in-class writing assignments. You must be present for these assignments. They can not be made up at a later time.

### Classroom Behavior

Classroom courtesy is essential. Students who attend class are motivated to learn and are annoyed when other students engage in disruptive behavior. Cell phones, beepers, chatting with friends, rattling newspapers and cracking food wrappers, and similar behaviors are annoying and distracting to other students. Please respect the right of each student to hear the lecture and participate in class discussion. Turn off all cell phones and beepers during class (or put them on "buzz" and sit near the door if you cannot protect your time and must be available to the outside world during class). If you must respond to a call or feel the need to converse with a classmate, please leave the room so that your activities will not disrupt class or interfere with the attention of other students.

## Psychology of Learning

### Schedule of Lecture Topics, Assigned Readings, and Exams

**NOTE: Dates are provided only for the day on which an exam is scheduled or discussion of a new topic begins. Classes will meet on all scheduled meeting days**

<b>Lecture Topics, Assigned Readings, and Exams</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Lecture Topics / Exams</b>	<b>Assigned Reading</b>
Aug 22	Course Mechanics	Syllabus
Aug 24	Overview of Course	Purdy et al. Chapter 1
Aug 29	Fundamentals of Classical Conditioning	Purdy et al. Chapter 2
<b>Sept 5</b>	<b>Labor Day Holiday - classes cancelled at UWF</b>	
Sept 7	Theoretical Issues: Classical Conditioning	Purdy et al. Chapter 3
<b>Sept 19</b>	<b>EXAM 1</b>	
Sept 21	Instrumental / Operant Conditioning	Purdy et al. Chapter 4
Sept 28	Use of Conditioning in Behavior Modification	
Oct 5	Theoretical Issues: Instrumental Conditioning	Purdy et al. Chapter 5
Oct 10	Interaction of Classical & Instrumental Conditioning	Purdy et al. Chapter 6
<b>Oct 21</b>	<b>EXAM 2</b>	
Oct 24	Generalization, Discrimination, & Concept Learning	Purdy et al. Chapter 7
Oct 31	Sensory & Working Memory	Purdy et al. Chapter 8
Nov 1	Encoding in Long Term Memory (LTM)	Purdy et al. Chapter 9
<b>Nov 9</b>	<b>EXAM 3</b>	
<b>Nov 11</b>	<b>Veteran's Day Holiday - classes cancelled at UWF</b>	
Nov 14	Long Term Memory Processes	Purdy et al. Chapter 10
	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday November 24 &amp; 25</b>	
Nov 28	Long Term Memory Processes	Purdy et al. Chapter 11
<b>Dec 7</b>	<b>EXAM 4 - Exam begins at 8:00 AM (Finals Week)</b>	