

# PSCH 3304: Psychology of Learning

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Professor: Dr. Culver  
Email: [tculver@sulross.edu](mailto:tculver@sulross.edu)  
Office: A107 Uvalde  
Office number: 8302793022

Office Hours:  
MW 1:45-3:30  
TTH 12-2 p.m.

The most effective way to contact the instructor is by email at [tculver@sulross.edu](mailto:tculver@sulross.edu). On weekdays, reply will be swift, usually within the day. To protect student privacy, send from your Sul Ross or Blackboard-registered email account.

Email etiquette requires that you sign your name in *every* email you send and specify the particular course or issue to which you are referring. Do not expect to get a response unless you extend this courtesy.

## Course Description

This course is a survey of the major theories and applications of behavioral principles, with a deep focus on classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning. It is intended as a first course on the subject.

## Learning Objectives

The objectives of this course are to:

- Achieve an understanding of the important topic areas of inquiry in the psychology of learning.
- Survey important topics in such a way as to enhance the utility of this psychological knowledge in daily life.
- Demonstrate the mastery of material covered in the course through successful completion of the weekly exams, final exam, and other assignments.
- Utilize the Internet as a tool in academic research and collaboration.

## Meeting Time and Location

The course is given online. Students will be required to log in for exams each week on the scheduled day (according to the course calendar). Other class assignments, including readings and discussion board participation, will need to be done on a weekly basis.

## Instructor

The instructor for this course is Dr. Tiffany Culver.

### Course Materials

#### Required Texts

Domjan, M. (2010). *The principles of learning and behavior*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Stamford, CT: Cengage.

⚡\* Illegal copies of textbooks are not allowed at any time in the testing labs.

### Assignments

#### I. Exams

Four exams will span material from the main (*Learning and Behavior*) textbook chapters. Exams will consist of 30 multiple choice items. Exams will be posted and available according to the course calendar. At the end of the semester, one exam grade will be dropped. Students should NOT purposely miss an exam; exams will be dropped when blackboard problems arise. I will NOT reset any exams.

The exams may be taken at any location; however, *students are strongly advised to take their exams at a university computer lab* where a technical staffer is available. Power outages, Internet disruptions, or other problems that might occur at your home; these problems *will not* be accepted as excuses for missing an exam or for going overtime on an exam.

Penalties may be assessed for going overtime—1 point per minute or fraction of a minute, for up to 5 minutes. These overtime points will be deducted from your scores *at the end of the semester*.

However, **going more than 5 minutes overtime will result in a 0 for the assignment immediately.** The 0 will appear as an exclamation point (!) in your grade list. Since going overtime is cheating, a student who acquired more than three (!) grades during the semester will automatically receive an F for the course.

Every student enrolled in this course is expected to attempt each exam that is given. Students who miss more than three exams will be dropped from the course with an automatic F.

**There will be NO resets on the exams. If your computer freezes up, that exam will be your drop grade. Do not ask me to reset any exams.**

#### II. The Final Exam

The final exam will cover all of the material in the course. The final exam will be given during final week. The final exam is mandatory.

### Assignment Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
2/7	Exam 1 Chapters 1, 2
2/24	Exam 2 Chapters 3, 4
3/24	Exam 3 Chapters 5, 6
4/21	Exam 4 Chapters 7, 8
5/10	Final Exam (chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

## Grading

### The Calculation of Grades

Grades for each assignment, and for the course itself, are calculated as follows: A: 90% or above; B: 80%-89%; C: 70%-79%; D: 60%-69%; F: 0%-59%.

Chapter Exams	300(one drop grade)
Final Exam	100
Total Pts	400

In order to determine your grade, simply add up your points and divide by 400. Then take that number and multiply by 100.

The times and dates when assignments are due and when evaluations are given will not be altered to fit your schedule. You will be expected to alter your schedule to fit class responsibilities.

In the interest of more thorough coverage of certain topics, the professor may decide to omit some of the assigned material from coverage on any particular exam. You are responsible to learn of any announced omissions.

### The Interpretation of Final Grades

The rigor of grading varies somewhat from course to course, from instructor to instructor, from discipline to discipline, and from school to school. It is important to understand that the level of effort needed to achieve a particular grade in another course, under another instructor, in another discipline, or at another institution, might not be an accurate gauge of the amount of effort needed to achieve the same grade in this course.

The following is a general description of grades:

The grade of A is awarded for performance that is excellent to some degree – anywhere from very good to brilliant. It indicates a masterful level of performance which is far above the average. It is the grade representing a level of performance usually attained by only the top ten or fifteen percent of a typical class.

The grade of B indicates superior performance. B work is by definition better than most. It is good performance, but not outstanding. Consistent B-level performance is something to take a measure of pride in, especially if it the best one can do.

The grade of C represents adequate performance, enough to get by with, but little more. The grade of C is the grade achieved by most people; hence, it is the embodiment of mediocrity. Unless it is the consequence of one's genuine best effort, it should seldom be regarded as a satisfactory grade for persons with ambition or conscientiousness about their work in the endeavor being graded. It is the grade that pleases individuals who are content with being third-rate in their academic efforts.

The grade of D means that there are serious deficiencies in performance that makes the work product less than adequate, a marginal failure. Repeatedly earning Ds, unless they are balanced by As and Bs, is an indication of failure. Being able generally to attain only Ds is an indication that further education in the field of performance being graded may hold no value for you.

An F means that the deficiencies in performance are so serious that the resulting work product is completely unacceptable. A 59 and below means that failure has occurred, yet there are degrees of failure. A grade in the 50s indicates some likelihood that adequate performance could have been achieved under different circumstances, but typically a grade of below 50 means that the student was so lacking in effort, understanding or competence that failure was almost a foregone conclusion without major behavioral changes or remediation of some kind.

#### The Basis of Final Grades

Grades in this course are based on performance alone. They will not be rounded upwards. It is important for every student to understand that evaluation is not based ultimately on how hard someone has worked to earn a particular grade, or whether someone needs this course to graduate. Nor are grades based on personal & family needs, or on personal conceptions about what seems to be fair. All grades, including your final course grade, will be based *solely* on your academic work in this course, according to the criteria described in this syllabus.

#### The Reporting of Final Grades

All final course grades will be posted on Blackboard. Final exams is a hectic time for students and the faculty alike, so please respect the privacy of all your professors during and after this period. Please do not initiate contact with me concerning grades or course over-rides between the start of the final exams period.

#### Course Participation

Students who miss more than three weekly exams will be dropped from the course.

#### Policy Concerning Missed Exams and Problems with Blackboard during Exams

No make-up exams should need to be given in this course due to the extended timeframe offered for testing.

If your computer or Blackboard "locks up" while taking an exam, it will probably be due to your failure to follow instructions about backtracking on completed test items; nevertheless, an attempt will be made to allow an immediate retake. If this is not possible, an attempt will be made to extrapolate a grade based on the completed portion of the exam. If an insufficient amount of the exam was completed, then at the professor's discretion, either a make-up will be recommended or the missing exam grade will be

replaced by an average of the other exam grades, or the final exam grade, at the end of the semester.

### Policy on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty and the penalties pertaining to it are described in the SRSU student handbook. In this course, all communication among students while taking exams is prohibited. Communicating material included on an exam with or in the presence of someone who has not yet taken that exam is also prohibited.

☛ Unless specifically authorized, no student shall take an exam at any computer outside of the designated testing facility, and no student may print, photograph, or copy any material from any exam. Students may not share books, notes, or any other form of communication during exams. Do NOT sit next to another student who is taking the same test in the lab unless no other seats are available. No student taking an exam should have open any website other than the Blackboard site. Close all other windows. Failure to follow these instructions may, at a minimum, result in a zero for the exam and might result in an F for the course.

Plagiarism, as every student should know, involves taking the work of others and claiming it as your own. It will not be tolerated. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, excellent guidelines can be found online at [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org).

Using an illegal copy of textbook materials constitutes academic dishonesty. If a student is found to be using illegally copied textbook material during an open-book exam, the penalty will be failure of the exam. In addition, the student will have the choice of immediately surrendering the illegal copy to SRSU faculty/staff or receiving a failing grade for the course.

☛ The penalty for serious academic dishonesty is severe: a student who turns in a plagiarized paper or cheats on an exam may receive an F for the entire course. A plagiarized paper will be given a zero on academic grounds alone, yet the student may face the additional disciplinary penalties for academic dishonesty. You and you alone are responsible for understanding and avoiding academic dishonesty in all your work.

### The Honor Code

As members of the academic community, no student should tolerate cheating. According to the honor code, it is the responsibility of each and every student to report obvious cheating or any suspicious behavior that may compromise the integrity of the grading process. The confidentiality and anonymity of students who report such incidents will be respected.

### Statement on Intellectual Tolerance and Academic Freedom

Psychology is a field of inquiry that touches upon many controversial issues, including sexuality, evolution, gender, race, ethnicity, individual differences, parenting, divorce, crime and public policy, drug use, religion, and multicultural issues, among others. Professors and students often have strong opinions and make forceful arguments concerning these phenomena. It is often educationally productive to address and debate these matters in the context of classroom instruction and course assignments. Social

taboos discouraging open discussion are inappropriate in this context and must be laid aside in the interest of intellectual inquiry.

Your grade will not be influenced in any way by expressing points of view that are in disagreement with the professor's. If time permits, students are encouraged to express their opinions and arguments whenever relevant to the subject material. The professor is free to do likewise.

Students who experience excessive anxiety or discomfort during the discussion of a sensitive topic (e.g., domestic abuse) should not hesitate to leave the classroom for a time if necessary and should never feel embarrassed for doing so. This can be an adaptive response to an emotionally difficult situation.

In contrast, other individuals are offended in principle by the mere exposure to concepts, opinions and arguments with which they disagree. The response of such persons is sometimes to try and close off discussion or to become hostile or vindictive toward others. Such persons are not encouraged to take psychology courses at Rio Grande College until they have resolved the personal issues preventing them from engaging in serious intellectual discourse.

### ADA

Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services. Students seeking accessibility services must contact *Kathy Biddick in RGC Student Services. The mailing address is 2623 Garner Field Rd (Room C 102), Uvalde, TX 78801. Telephone: 830-279-3003. E-mail: kbiddick@sulross.edu.*

### Miscellaneous

In web-based courses, due to the difficulty of coordinating schedules and meeting times, it will not be possible for students to meet with me and individually review their performance on weekly assignments. To improve their performance or to prepare for the final exam, students should instead review the course material directly. If, however, a student is concerned about the accuracy of a test item or a grade, the student may arrange an office appointment with me at the end of the semester; the student will be provided with an opportunity to review their performance on all assignments at that time.

In the computer labs when people are testing and in all courses taught by teleconference, it is absolutely essential that all students behave so as to minimize noise and disruption, including whispering.

### Teaching Philosophy

A college degree signifies accomplishment; it will increase a person's prestige and can help its holder acquire a job. However, once the job is taken, success depends on what has been learned—a college degree by itself is merely a sheet of paper. If a student takes full advantage of the opportunity of education, the sheet of paper signifies skills and knowledge that will improve one's value as a worker and as a member of the community. If not, the student might find himself or herself with a sheet of paper only, without additional skills, useful knowledge, or value to employers. RGC psychology courses are

designed to provide students with knowledge and skills that will help them in their careers, in their relationships, and in their capacity to be responsible members of a community.

#### Contacting Technical Support

Most technical problems that students experience using Blackboard can be avoided by using *Google Chrome* as your web browser rather than *Internet Explorer*. If you have a problem with technical issues such as downloading a file or taking an exam, contact an Office of Information Technology (OIT) staffer for assistance or call the OIT Helpdesk. The Helpdesk is available seven days of the week.

- From on-campus, call 8765.
- From off-campus, call (888) 691-5071.

If you are downloading syllabi and other documents, you should update your computer for compatibility with Microsoft Office 2007. The free update is available at: <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=941B3470-3AE9-4AEE-8F43-C6BB74CD1466&displaylang=en>

*Distance Education Statement:* Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.