

SS5751: LEARNING AND BEHAVIOR

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Learning and Behavior

Subject Code

SS - Social and Behavioural Sciences

Course Number

5751

Academic Unit

Social and Behavioural Sciences (SS)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

MSSPSY Students : Nil

Non-MSSPSY Students : SS1101 Basic Psychology or its equivalent

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims to 1) introduce the theories and basic principles in the psychology of learning and behavior, 2) examine factors that facilitate or constrain a human's or an animal's abilities to adapt to their environment, and 3) develop students' conceptual and practical abilities to apply these theories and principles in real life situations. By the end of the course, students should be able to use these learning theories and their empirical evidence to analyse human behaviour scientifically and identify the ethical issues in animal research.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	describe and compare the major features of the theories and principles in learning and behavior and their underlying processes, extensions, and limitations;	45	x	x	
2	identify factors affecting learning processes and behavioral outcomes; and	30	x	x	
3	evaluate critically hypothetical and/or real-life examples using learning principles.	25	x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Lectures will expand upon the text by considering some topics in greater detail and include materials not discussed in the text. Students are encouraged to share their creative examples for how the learning principles can be applied.	1, 2, 3	

2	Self-learning activities	Self-learning activities will be done outside of class. These activities are meant to be a fun and interesting way to increase students' comprehension of course material and to help them discover how theories in learning can be applied to everyday life.	1, 2, 3	
3	Class activities	Class participation is an integral part of the course. Students are strongly encouraged to learn the concepts of learning and discover new ideas by participating in the class activities. They are also welcome to ask questions and to freely discuss the topics introduced in class. The primary objective of the class activities is to reinforce course concepts and theories, and to integrate lectures and self-learning activities.	1, 2, 3	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("-" for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Literature report (20%)	1, 2, 3	20	-Proof editing only	Yes
2	Group presentation (40%)	1, 2, 3	40	-Proof editing -Brainstorm and generate initial ideas	Yes
3	Quiz (40%)	1, 2, 3	40	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Literature report (20%) (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Students will review a journal paper related to classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning, or social learning. In addition to summarizing the major study findings and analysing the study strengths and limitations, students need to apply the research findings to real-life example(s).

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Very succinct and clear summary of the chosen academic journal paper. Very clear and accurate presentation of the theories or concepts related to the study. Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is highly accurate, relevant, and in-depth. Creative and insightful original ideas are demonstrated. Format of citations and references are highly accurate. The organization of the report is very well-structured and highly coherent. The presentation is very creative, effective and clear.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Succinct and clear summary of the chosen academic journal paper. Clear and accurate presentation of the theories or concepts related to the study. Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is accurate, relevant, and in-depth. Some original ideas are demonstrated. Format of citations and references are accurate. The organization of the report is coherent. The presentation is effective and clear.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Generally clear summary of the chosen academic journal paper. Clear and accurate presentation of the theories or concepts related to the study. Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is accurate and relevant though not in-depth enough. Format of citations and references are accurate in general.

Marginal

(D) Summary of the chosen academic journal paper is not clear enough. Presentation of the theories or concepts related to the study is fair. Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is not accurate and in-depth enough.

Failure

(F) The report demonstrates insufficient relevance to the subject matter or is found to be plagiarized.

Assessment Task

2. Group presentation (40%) (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Students will apply theories/principles of learning to develop a program for health behavior modification.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is highly accurate, relevant, and in-depth. Very deep level of discussion and reflection is demonstrated. Highly creative and insightful ideas and/or findings are generated. Excellent team work is shown. The presentation is very effective, innovative and clear, and fluent.

Good

(B+, B, B-) Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is accurate, relevant, and in-depth. Deep level of discussion and reflection is demonstrated. Creative and insightful ideas and/or findings are generated. Good team work is evident. The presentation is effective, innovative and clear.

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is generally accurate and relevant though not deep enough. Some level of reflection is demonstrated. Some new ideas and/or findings are generated. The presentation is in general effective but not clear enough.

Marginal

(D) Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is inaccurate, barely relevant and superficial. Limited reflection is demonstrated. The ideas and findings appear to be trivial. The presentation is minimally effective and not clear. Problems of expression occur in places.

Failure

(F) The presentation demonstrate insufficient relevance to the subject matter.

Assessment Task

3. Quiz (40%) (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

This quiz is designed to assess students' knowledge in learning theories.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Strong evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to apply them to real-life situations

Good

(B+, B, B-) Good evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to apply them to real-life situations

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Fair evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to apply them to real-life situations

Marginal

(D) Limited evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to apply them to real-life situations

Failure

(F) Insufficient evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to apply them to real-life situations

Assessment Task

1. Literature report (20%) (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Students will review a journal paper related to classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning, or social learning. In addition to summarizing the major study findings and analysing the study strengths and limitations, students need to apply the research findings to real-life example(s).

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Very succinct and clear summary of the chosen academic journal paper. Very clear and accurate presentation of the theories or concepts related to the study. Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is highly accurate, relevant, and in-depth. Creative and insightful original ideas are demonstrated. Format of citations and references are highly accurate. The organization of the report is very well-structured and highly coherent. The presentation is very creative, effective and clear.

Good

(B+, B) Succinct and clear summary of the chosen academic journal paper. Clear and accurate presentation of the theories or concepts related to the study. Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is accurate, relevant, and in-depth. Some original ideas are demonstrated. Format of citations and references are accurate. The organization of the report is coherent. The presentation is effective and clear.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Generally clear summary of the chosen academic journal paper. Clear and accurate presentation of the theories or concepts related to the study. Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is accurate and relevant though not in-depth enough.

Format of citations and references are accurate in general.

Failure

(F) The report demonstrates insufficient relevance to the subject matter or is found to be plagiarized.

Assessment Task

2. Group presentation (40%) (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Students will apply theories/principles of learning to develop a program for health behavior modification.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is highly accurate, relevant, and in-depth. Very deep level of discussion and reflection is demonstrated. Highly creative and insightful ideas and/or findings are generated. Excellent team work is shown. The presentation is very effective, innovative and clear, and fluent.

Good

(B+, B) Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is accurate, relevant, and in-depth. Deep level of discussion and reflection is demonstrated. Creative and insightful ideas and/or findings are generated. Good team work is evident. The presentation is effective, innovative and clear.

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Application of psychological theories and knowledge to the target issue is inaccurate, barely relevant and superficial. Limited reflection is demonstrated. The ideas and findings appear to be trivial. The presentation is minimally effective and not clear. Problems of expression occur in places.

Failure

(F) The presentation demonstrate insufficient relevance to the subject matter.

Assessment Task

3. Quiz (40%) (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

This quiz is designed to assess students' knowledge in learning theories.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Strong evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to apply them to real-life situations

Good

(B+, B) Good evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to apply them to real-life situations

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Fair to limited evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to real-life situations

Failure

(F) Insufficient evidence for the ability to understand and describe the knowledge and concepts, and to apply them to real-life situations

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Behavioristic Approach to Learning. Classical Conditioning. Instrumental Conditioning. Reinforcement. Avoidance and Punishment. Extinction and Stimulus Control. Choice and Self Control. Observational Learning. Social Learning.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Domjan M. (2010). The principles of learning and behavior (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
2	Powell, R. A., Symaluk D. G., & Honey, P. L. (2009). Introduction to learning and behavior (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Baron, A., & Galizio M. (2005). Positive and negative reinforcement: Should the distinction be preserved? The Behavior Analyst 28(2), 85-98.
2	Baum, W. M. (2005). Understanding behaviorism: Behavior culture, and evolution (2nd ed.). Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.
3	Chance, P. (2003). Learning and behavior (5th ed.). Belmont: Thomson.
4	Kendal, R. L. (2008). Animal "culture wars". The Psychologist 21(4), 312-315.
5	Franken, R. E. (2007). Human motivation (6th ed.). Belmont: Thomson.
6	Herrmann, E., Call, J., Hernandez-Lloreda M. V., Hare, B., & Tomasello M. (2007). Humans have specialized skills of social cognition: The cultural intelligence hypothesis. Science 317 1360-1366.
7	Mackay, D. (2007). Motivation, ability and confidence building in people. Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann.
8	Mazur, J. E. (2006). Learning and behavior (6th ed.). NJ: Prentice-Hall.
9	Schunk, D. H. (2008). Learning theories: An educational perspective (5th ed.). NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
10	Schunk, D. H. (2008). Motivation in education: Theory, research and applications (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.