Psychology 104A: "Behavior Analysis" Spring, 2009
Home of the Wofford College 'Iron Rat' Basketball Team

RMSC-233 MWF 1:00-1:50pm Lab: Wed 2:00-5:00pm

Dr. A. K. Reid Office Phone: 597-4642 Email: REIDAK@wofford.edu
Office: RMSC-231C Classroom: RMSC-233 Lab: RMSC-225
Course web page: http://webs.wofford.edu/reidak/

Textbooks:

- Pearce, J. M. (2008). Animal Learning & Cognition, 3rd Ed. Psychology Press: New York.

Course Content and Purpose:

Science is a process of acquiring knowledge about the natural world, including the behavior and mental abilities of humans and other animals. Behavior analysis is a scientific, experiment-based, study of behavior that seeks to explain all the behavior of an organism in terms of a limited number of fundamental processes and their rules of interaction. Over the last century or more, thousands of experiments have successfully identified many of the fundamental processes responsible for learning, our social interactions, our likes and dislikes, self-control & procrastination, how we adapt to new situations, and most of our other behaviors. This course identifies these processes and shows how they can explain our own behavior and that of lower animals. The textbook is a fun description of animal behavior, and in the classroom we will show how these processes can improve our understanding of ourselves and our social interactions.

The laboratory component of the course has two components. Films about animal behavior will often be shown in the weekly lab period. Outside of this period, students will work in pairs to train their rat to play one-on-one basketball. Training will occur daily, leading to the Final Four Rat Basketball Tournament in April. By training rats to play basketball, students will incorporate many of the behavioral principles they learn in the classroom and have a great time doing it. Students will become highly experienced animal trainers. Over the years, some students from this course have worked summer jobs as Disney World and Sea World training a variety of species for public performance.

Objectives:

a) To learn to explain the behavior of an organism in terms of a limited number of fundamental processes and their rules of interaction.
b) To learn advanced techniques of animal training.
c) To develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between humans and lower animals.

Course Requirements: You are expected to attend every class period and complete every lab assignment. Naturally, you are responsible for all reading assignments and all lecture material. In accordance with Wofford's policy on class attendance**,** unexcused absences will lower your final grade. Excused absences include those due to documented medical need or an *official* college event. **Written excuses are required for absences to be excused**. In every case of missed class, students are ultimately responsible for the material and experiences covered during their absence. If you miss class, never ask the professor if you missed anything important! You did, and other students did not benefit from your ideas!

In all situations, the responsibilities and procedures of the Wofford College Honor Code will be followed: http://www.wofford.edu/studentLife/honorCode.pdf

Methods of Evaluation: Your final grades will be based on exams, in-class discussion, occasional written assignments (in class and out of class), and on your laboratory projects. There will be three exams (including the final exam), which will typically contain a mixture of short-answer and objective questions. All of your lab assignments must be completed. Students will work in pairs to train their rat to compete in one-on-one basketball, and your rat's success will contribute to your lab grade. Naturally, the rat that wins the Final Four Rat Basketball Tournament will be the best trained, reflecting the superior abilities and dedication of its trainers.

Working together with your professor, you will create a classroom environment that will stimulate discussion of the reading material and applications to important questions in life. You will have the opportunity to challenge yourself and your classmates about your opinions and your ways of viewing the world. The classroom is an opportunity for active participation and discussion of intriguing questions -- a time to have fun exploring ideas and to learn from others.

Therefore, discussion in class is expected -- your contribution will affect your grade. The more you contribute to the creation of a stimulating, educational classroom environment, the higher your grade will be. It will be obvious to all if you arrive to class without having completed the assigned reading, and such negligence will, of course, lower your grade.

Boring Catalog Description: A study of topics selected to introduce students to basic concepts in psychology and to the scientific method. Does not count toward a major in psychology or toward science requirements for the BS degree.

Designed to develop in students an appreciation of the procedures of logical inquiry, observation, abstraction, generalization, analysis, and prediction by which scientists organize man's understanding of nature, these courses place emphasis on exemplifying science, rather than on acquiring familiarity with a specific body of content. The instructors involve their students in science studies closely related to the instructors' fields of competence and enthusiasm.

The professor reserves the right to make alterations to this syllabus.